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THE

WILMINGTONS.

A NOVEL.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"TWO OLD MEN'S TALES," "EMILIA WYNDHAM,"

"MORDAUNT HALL," &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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THE WILMINGTONS.

PART II.

CHAPTER V.

> Yet to be just to these poor men of pelf,
> Each does but hate his neighbour as himself.
>
> POPE.

THAT evening, which Lord George was sighing away at the feet of his little mistress, and which his poor little mistress spent in fidgeting and tormenting herself, and wishing she had never come home, was spent still more uncomfortably in Belgrave-square.

They were a family party. There was Mr. Wilmington, Lizzy, the good aunt, Caroline, and Henry.

Henry had returned from his walk, gloomy as a winter day. It was impossible for him to conquer or to hide his melancholy and depression. Caroline perceived it with sorrow and surprise. She could not conceive what had discomposed him so much. She had observed him looking uncomfortable during the morning, but there was a wintry darkness over his face now, which exceeded all she had seen before. She felt more than usually anxious and uneasy.

However, the dinner was got over, and they had assembled early in the drawing-room. Mr. Wilmington, as usual, careless and unobserving of others, perfectly insensible to the anxieties of his son and daughter, was engaged in unpacking some of his various objects of vertu, and displaying them to the best advantage about his drawing-room. Lizzy, a good deal tired and rather out of humour, was lounging rather sulkily upon a sofa; Caroline looking thoroughly uncomfortable; and Mrs. Vernon as cross as the tongs.

Henry walked up and down the room: now he looked into a book, shut it again, and sighed; now he started and aroused himself as he was

summoned from time to time to admire some of Mr. Wilmington's importations.

"A Danneker, Henry,—look well, I thought, upon the slab. An Ariadne; pretty, isn't it? Handsome specimen of coloured glass this, I flatter myself. Take care, Howley, how you lift it—heavy—colour very fine—the crimson particularly rich. Bless you! take care of that portfolio!—original sketches by the first masters! Count Rozamufsky offered me twenty thousand roubles for my purchase;—did not know I had an eye for these things. Who was it, Lizzy, that said that cup was a real bijou? The Princess—what—pooh—I forget these names strangely."

"The Princess Demidoffsky, was it? really I don't remember—and there is such a noise in that horrid square—and how is one to see anything by an English sun?"

"You can't see anything, to be sure, if you lie there," said Mrs. Vernon; "and as for the noise, you used to endure the noise of Wimpole-street and be thankful for it."

"You are tired, my dear Lizzy," said Caroline, kindly; "one often feels things disagreeable when

first one comes home; because one's spirits are exhausted."

"My goodness! how true that is, my dear. How horridly flat this stupid England does feel after that dear brilliant Continent—I am sure I wonder how you kill time here."

"Now, Mrs. Vernon, I have something for you to admire—I am sure this will be particularly to your taste—it is a most rare piece of antique carving, and cost me—faith, Hal, I am ashamed to say how much," began Mr. Wilmington again.

"What, this hideous thing!" said the uncompromising Mrs. Vernon.

"My dear madam, what do you say? I assure you it is the most astonishing piece——"

"Oh, la!" said Lizzy; "don't tease Mrs. Vernon with vertu, she cares nothing about it. There, madam, I really hope you will like this little Dresden déjeunér."

"That is extremely pretty," said Caroline; "my aunt, I am sure——"

"Why," said Mrs. Vernon, whose integrity of spirit was hardly proof against old china, and who

felt mollified in spite of herself, at the beauty of the offering, as she considered it to be; "it is very pretty of you, and I should be sorry ———"

"I am glad you admire this, at least, ma'am. I am sure I shall never endure to take my breakfast out of anything else. I verily believe I could not put Spode's or Chamberlain's to my lips now, so I indulged myself with this little déjeunér for my own boudoir. One would not lose all delicacy of taste the moment one puts one's foot in this barbarous country. Caroline, my dear, I have brought you a tasse and soucoupe, and I hope Mrs. Vernon will do me the favour to accept of this," presenting a rather ordinary-looking little affair, intended to hold flowers; "I thought this would look pretty in your little drawing-room, ma'am."

"Thank you. Bless me how unlucky!" cried Mrs. Vernon, letting the cup slip through her fingers as she received it, and it was dashed into a thousand pieces on the floor.

"Dear madam, how provoking! Really I am very sorry for you; but I hope I shall be able to find something else."

"Oh! don't trouble yourself. It is not of the least importance in the world."

"Henry, my dear, here is something for you. Come, do put aside that woe-begone look, and behave like a rationality—there's a good creature," cried Lizzy, who, in displaying her treasures, had become animated again. Here is a drinking-glass for your nécessaire de toilette. You are a sloven, you sad boy, and want such little elegancies."

There had been no great extravagance here, but the glass was pretty enough, and Henry accepted it good humouredly.

Mrs. Vernon looked as if she would have liked to have handled the glass too.

Lizzy, however, once in for it, was not to be stopped. One article of selfish luxury or another succeeded the presents; and, so utterly vain and silly was she, and her perceptions so perverted, that she really believed she was raising herself in the opinions of her new relations by this exhibition.

"Now, my dears, let me show you my nécessaire. I protest I cannot exist without it. Everything in China, gold and Bohemian glass—it really

is a bijou altogether . . . . This lace I got—What's the name of the horrid place?—I really own I was extravagant—but they all said it was so beautiful. The Comtesse Elise de Renault—La! what a vain creature she was—was absolutely dying of despair because she could get none like it," &c., &c.

While Henry's brow grew darker and darker; at last Mr. Wilmington said,

"Upon my soul, Henry, you are most depressingly silent this evening. I think, sir, you might pluck up a little cheerfulness to welcome your mother's return, and Caroline, too."

Caroline's eyes were fixed mournfully upon her brother: she could not divine the reason of this excessive melancholy.

Henry tried to laugh.

"Oh, sir! you know I am the stupidest fellow in the world."

"There *is* something the matter, however, Henry," said Mrs. Vernon; "tell us what it is?"

"Oh! business for to-morrow," said he again, with a forced laugh.

"Ay! business to-morrow," laughed Wil-

mington, affectedly; and turning on his heel, he hummed a French couplet to that effect.

And this is the way the first evening was passed.

Now, it must be told that during Mr. Wilmington's absence, Estcourt and Joncs had embarked in some very advantageous speculations; and actuated partly by prudence—for they were with reason alarmed at the extent of property Mr. Wilmington was annually consuming—partly instigated by jealousy, and a hearty dislike to their man;—partly by a conviction that now was the time to get a very promising business entirely into their own hands, and thus divide the profits between two instead of three, they had made up their minds to dissolve the partnership.

By the articles of agreement, any two of the partners might effect this, upon condition of leaving it optional with the one who had not proposed the measure, either to advance to the others

the value of their several shares, retaining the concern in his own hands, or, failing this, to quit it upon the same conditions.

Both Jones and Estcourt felt convinced from what had lately been going on under their eyes, namely, the vain and unlimited expense in which Mr. Wilmington was indulging, and the symptoms of an exceeded income in the sale of sundry species of property, as above related,—that this gentleman would not find it convenient, or even possible, to buy them both out. Nor did they imagine, knowing the character of the man, and his reputation in the world of business, that moneyed friends would be found inclined to advance the requisite sums. They knew that his late marriage with a very pretty, dressy, extravagant girl, nearly thirty years younger than himself, and whose father's credit for wealth was not particularly high, was a thing at which sensible men shook their heads ominously. So they decided that this was an opportunity not to be neglected, of getting rid of a man that one of the two despised, and the other secretly envied and hated.

So the next morning, when Mr. Wilmington, accompanied by his son, rode down into the City, these gentlemen, after a little humming, hawing, and hesitating, and a few smooth speeches from Estcourt—smooth as the blade of a sharp penknife—which followed the rather blunter and less polished exordium from Jones, concluded with,—

"Views of things differing.—Ideas as regarded money matters so widely contrasted.—Partnerships unpleasant under such circumstances.—Hope that there would be no interruption of private friendship," &c., &c., suggested a separation; and begged Mr. Wilmington, according to the conditions of the articles, to exercise his privilege, either by retaining the concern, advancing to them the value of their respective shares, or, of quitting it altogether, upon receiving in ready money, or in bills at not more than three months' date, the amount of his own.

Mr. Wilmington was thunderstruck. He stood for a few moments pale, aghast, and literally speechless, before the cold and smooth Estcourt, who, far from appearing to notice his emotion,

continued his discourse in that passionless, polite tone of voice, which glides like cold venom through the veins of the excited listener.

Henry stood a little behind his father, his whole strength, moral and physical, sternly employed in mastering the vehement indignation which agitated his heart. His forehead was crimson, but he compressed his lips, and was resolutely silent. He had feared, it was true, that some such measure was in agitation, or would speedily be in agitation, unless his father should avert it by a more prudent conduct. But so suddenly, without preparation. — So immediately upon his return home.—No explanation given.—No time for explanation allowed, appeared to him a haste as unwarrantable as it was unhandsome and cruel.

He stood there, his eyes fixed upon his father. He witnessed the excess of an agitation which seemed to shake every muscle of his frame, with anxiety, but without surprise; desiring, rather than hoping, that he would have sufficient command over himself, to preserve, outwardly at least, that calm and dignified demeanour which

would have been so becoming under the circumstances.

But the silence of Wilmington lasted only so long as the spasm at his heart forbad utterance. He then burst forth with the rage and violence common to characters so weak and excitable.

"Z——ds, gentlemen, is this what I am to expect from you? Heaven and Earth! what have we been about these last three years? I thought I had to do with friends and allies. D—— my soul, but it was with a couple of plotting *gentlemen*, who, the moment my back is turned, lay their heads together to oust me out of my own. But, d—— me, if you shall succeed, though. Buy you out! Yes, thank Heaven, I have enough to buy ten thousand such pitiful schemers as you out. You think to be too sharp with me. You think I want friends. Did you ever hear of one Craiglethorpe?"

"Upon my word," began Jones—

"Sir," said Estcourt, "this passion, let me take the liberty to tell you, is very unseemly on your part, and the expressions made use of not xactly what one would expect from a *polished*

gentleman and man of the world, such as Mr. Wilmington. Had Mr. Craiglethorpe been at hand, there may be no doubt that he would have been but too happy to place the large fortune which I understand he has realised in India at your disposal; and, had that proved the case, unquestionably you might have been able to fulfil the necessary conditions of the articles; and Jones and I must have even done as well as we could, and made such a little pitiful business together as best we might. But you will please to recollect that three months is the extent of time allowed by the agreement for these arrangements; and, as my friend and I are anxious to lose no time, perhaps some gentleman a little nearer at hand than Mr. Craiglethorpe may be found to do the needful."

"He is coming home," said Wilmington, gnashing his teeth, "and he'll see you both d——d; but he'll revenge me,—make you sure of that!"

"Sir! upon my word," again put forward Jones.

"Sir! father!" exclaimed Henry, stepping forward.

"Be quiet, Henry, with your mild, sheep-faced ways! What! d—— you! is a man to be imposed upon . . . . to be swindled out of . . ."

"Sir! this is language," said the imperturbable Estcourt, "as improper for you to use as for us to hear. A gentleman, Mr. Wilmington I am sorry to find needs to be told, is one who knows how to be master of himself upon all occasions, and is neither to be hurried into unseemly expressions with respect to others, nor to be heated by unseemly passion when such terms are applied by childish rage to himself. Mr. Jones and I, let me tell you, sir, are honourable men, no more deserving of the expressions you are pleased to make use of, than you are. We merely, in conformity to articles long since agreed upon, and in compliance with what, in our opinion, a due regard to our just interest requires, propose, in the most amicable manner, to terminate a connection with one,—pardon me! notwithstanding his acknowledged accomplishments,—not exactly constituted for the conduct of a business of this description. You will excuse me; plain-dealing between friends is best."

"Between friends!" indignantly turning his back upon the polished speaker.

"I see," said Estcourt, with a smile of sarcastic pity at this childish effervescence of intemperate and undisciplined feelings; "we are wasting words here. Mr. Henry Wilmington, our respective men of business had better meet upon this occasion. I bid you good morning for the present. A few days will decide whether this counting-house is to be your's or our's. In the interim things had better proceed in the usual manner. It would be absurd and contemptible—a meanness, I flatter myself, of which I and my friend here are equally incapable,—to run the slightest risk of injuring a concern with which, perhaps, in a few weeks, we may have nothing further to do."

And so saying he bowed and left the room, mounted his horse, the completest thing of the kind in London, and followed by his neat and perfectly-appointed groom, rode quickly through the City and into the Regent's Park; his temper as little ruffled by the violence of his quondam friend, as if he had been contending with a pas-

sionate child. As for compassionating his excessive agitation, or sympathizing in the slightest degree with his feelings, that was out of the question in this case, as in every other with Mr. Estcourt. That busy, fluttering, good, old thing, the human heart,—except as a cistern-wheel to forward the machinery of the body,—had been left out of his composition. It was not that he *did* not, but that he *could* not feel for anybody. He could scarcely be said to *feel* even for himself.

Jones was of more vulgar clay. Vulgar clay does, after all, feel for its fellow dust; it is only these cold, highly-polished substances that are impenetrable to human tears. Jones was rough, coarse, and selfish, but he was not a stock or a stone.

"Henry," he said, in a low voice, "I am sorry," looking at Wilmington, who was pacing hastily and silently from one end of the counting-house to the other: "I am really sorry. But d'ye see, Estcourt and I don't much like this way of life of your father's. No pretence to interfere; —better part at once."

"Interfere!" fiercely interrupted Wilmington;

"Interfere! Heavens and Earth! I should like to see either of you meddling with me!"

"Well, my good friend, then, as Estcourt says, why do you put yourself in such a passion? There is nothing unreasonable in what we propose.—You buy us out if you can; we buy you out if you can't. All quite fair and above board, is it not, Henry?"

"My father is surprised," said Henry; "and you cannot wonder that he is somewhat indignant at this hasty and unexpected proceeding. But every one is the best judge of his own affairs, and you and Mr. Estcourt are undoubtedly both entitled to act in the manner you deem best calculated to promote your interests. Come, sir," to his father, "let us mount our horses. There is nothing more for us to do here to-day."

"Nothing more, nothing more!" said poor Wilmington, almost choking, and casting one look round the room,—one of those looks with which men regard for the last time the place endeared by the associations of many years. He took his son's arm, and quitted the spot.

He left Jones master of the field; who, after

shrugging his shoulders and watching his old friend out of sight, returned to his desk, and to the interesting occupation of conducting a concern which he now looked upon as more than ever his own.

CHAPTER VI.

My tales of love were wont to weary you;
I know you joy not in a love discourse.

SHAKSPEARE.

THE conviction that it was utterly impossible to raise the money to buy the other partners out pressed invincibly upon the minds of both father and son.

While Henry sighed at the recollection of that waste of property which had exposed his father to this insulting treatment, Wilmington groaned over the absence of Craiglethorpe. There was no chance or possibility of his returning or sending remittances in time to avert the catastrophe

therefore, all that could be done was to write a most indignant account of these proceedings to his friend, in which you may be sure neither partner was spared.

Yet it was rather as a matter of pique than from any other feeling, that Wilmington was so desirous to baffle the designs of the others. His pride, or rather his vanity, was all in arms at the idea of being bought out; and, therefore, when, in due time, the affair was concluded, and he received a large sum as his share of this most lucrative concern, mortified to the quick, he began to look about for some grand speculation or other in which to invest his property, hoping by the brilliance of his success to triumph over his rivals.

Such a speculation was not long in presenting itself. In our immense commercial world opportunity is never wanting for the disposal of capital; and the most flattering prospects are for ever dazzling the eyes of the votaries of Fortune. Votaries as blindly devoted to the goddess of the chances may be found under the sober garb of the merchant, as under the gayest vesture of fashion. Wilmington was, after all, indulging much the same spirit as a

gambler at Crockford's. He hated labour, he hated thought; of that determined perseverance by which ultimate success is to be ensured, he was incapable: he would have held it beneath him to plod and to toil. To make a brilliant stroke—to carry fortune by a coup de main, as it were, was equally flattering to his vanity and to his indolence.

Not so the more judicious Henry. As averse to the means by which such fortunes are acquired, as indifferent to their possession when obtained, he used every argument with his father to induce him to content himself with the still handsome property left, to retrench his vain expenditure, and to live for himself and his family.

He might as well have talked to the winds. Wilmington contented himself with laughing at the prudential young man, as he called him, and pursued his career undauntedly.

In the meantime, Flavia was harassed by Lord George's assiduities, which were more unre-

mitting than ever: whilst Henry, troubled and unhappy, felt his anxieties increase with every fresh instance of his father's levity. He was more deeply engaged in business than ever, through his desire to maintain some order in his father's affairs. So that, while that father, gay and thoughtless, was driving his Lizzy about the Park, attending her to the Opera, and exhibiting her at every place of public amusement, Henry could scarcely command an hour to himself, and would come home to dinner so thoroughly jaded and exhausted, that he had not the spirits to go out in the evening, not even when he expected to meet Flavia. Caroline, on the contrary, went out more than usual, as Lizzy made a great point of her accompanying her to her various parties; and she would not produce ill-will by refusing.

They often encountered Flavia, who always met them with affectionate cordiality—would say two or three pleasant things to Lizzy, take Caroline's hand, and look round disappointed. Lord George was never far from her side. One night the following conversation passed within hearing of Miss Wilmington and Lizzy:—

"Well, I am sure, I wonder at her—nay, I wonder at *him*."

"La! wonder at him.—Why, don't you know, she is a great Welsh heiress?"

"Yes; but it's nothing of a connection. Do you know, her grandfather made his fortune nobody knows how? Such a mésalliance, as it was thought, for her mother!"

"Oh! Lord George never heeds that: but I don't think she much likes him."

"Then I am sure it is a great shame, if she does not. I know they are engaged."

"Did you hear that, Caroline?" said Lizzy. "So she has secured him, after all. I never thought Lord George would have condescended so far." Her countenance darkening with envy, "Why, he is grandson to the Duke of C——."

"I cannot think the report can be true," said Caroline, looking to the other end of the room where Flavia sat, her face averted, and eyes fixed upon the floor, half turned from Lord George, who was talking to her with the greatest animation. "I do not think she likes him, and Flavia is not

weak enough to be persuaded into marrying any one she does not really like."

"Not like him! That is so odd of you. As if any one could possibly help liking him!"

Flavia soon after this rose and joined them, and Lord George walked away.

"Caroline, I see nothing of you now," said she.

"That is your own fault, my dear; you never come to us, and we cannot with propriety go to you."

"No," said Lizzy, you live with such fine folks, I wonder you condescend to acknowledge us; and I suppose we must not look for the favour long. I see a certain gentleman walks away when you come near us."

"That is no affair of mine, Lizzy."

"Oh, no; you have no influence, I perceive,—none in the least. But if you really are not above such vulgar things, perhaps you will honour me with your company on the 27th," presenting a card.

"I should be delighted; but I have no chaperone."

"If old times were old times, and old friends were old friends, you would not want a chaperone where I was," said Mrs. Wilmington.

"No, that I am sure I should not. But the coming?"

"It could all be arranged, Lizzy," said Caroline, "if you would ask Flavia to let me fetch her in the morning. Then she can dress in my room, and we can take her home the following day, if you are not grown too fine, dear Flavia," added she, in a caressing tone.

"Dearest Caroline, that I am not; I shall like it of all things. I will settle it with the Duchess, who is good nature itself, and I will be sure to be ready. Call for me early, that's a good girl."

"Flavia," said Lord George, coming up with a lowring brow, "Lady Symes has been waiting for you these two hours;—have you done?"

And he made a distant bow to her two friends.

"I am sorry I have kept her waiting. Good night, dear Caroline; don't forget to fetch me. I am sure the Duchess will let me go," looking round at Lord George as she went away.

"Go!—go where?"

"To a ball at Mrs. Wilmington's, on the 27th."

"Always at those cursed Wilmington's. You shan't go!"

"Shan't go! Who shall prevent me?"

"I will, Flavia. I see you are determined to provoke me; but, by heavens and earth, you had better not!"

She made no answer, but went up to Lady Symes, who conveyed her to the Duchess' door, and there left her.

She crossed the hall, and went up stairs, attended by a footman, carrying a light. She took it from him in the gallery, intending to go into her own room, but recollecting a book she wanted from the drawing-room, turned in there first.

She started; for on the sofa lay Lord George. He sprang up, and before she could prevent him, shut the door. She went to the table to look for her book; he came up to her.

"Flavia, I must,—I will understand you; and no better opportunity than this for coming to an explanation. I see you hate and detest me!" he went on passionately; "I see all I suffer is nothing in your eyes; I see my ruin—my irretrievable

ruin—now and hereafter, is nothing to you. You do not care, insensible, and child that you are; but no, you are no child. You——"

"True, George, I *am* no longer a child; and this is a persecution to which I will not submit. I do not know why or by what right you assume this tone to me. Let me go now, for I will not stay one moment with you."

"You shall stay,—you shall hear me!" laying his hand upon the lock of the door; "you shall hear me, cruel Flavia. I love you; oh! how dearly,—how dearly!—and you will not even listen to me. You trifle with me in the most barbarous manner."

"I do *not* trifle with you," said she, looking very grave at this accusation. "I never trifled with you for a single moment. I always said I did not like your way of talking to me, and I say it again. I can not endure it; it teazes me to death; it makes me wretched. I insist upon your letting me go away, or I never will speak to you any more."

"How must I speak? What must I say, Flavia? We are almost engaged to each other—

our parents have pledged themselves. Your mother has promised that your wealth shall not leave her noble family—that it shall not enrich a despicable adventurer. You are mine—and you know it."

"I know nothing of it; and I never will be yours," said she, with vehemence. "Now I understand you, now you speak out; but I never, never, never will be yours. Lord George, open the door."

"I will not, till you have told me one thing."

"I will tell you nothing. Are you not ashamed to keep me here against my will? I shall end by detesting you."

"Oh, Flavia!" and he flung himself at her feet; "how can you—how can you—you that I loved from the time you were a little infant in your nurse's arms—the only thing in the world I really ever did love! It is not, Heaven forbid! it is not your money, which, you know, our parents —our good grandmother, our mothers—wish so earnestly to retain,—Heaven bless them for wishing me happy!—but, oh, my Flavia!—my Flavia! it is yourself—your loveliness, as I saw you in

your little white frock; a child you were then—a child you are now—you have the sweetness and innocence of a little child; and I love you—I idolize you—so help me, Heaven!—as never creature loved creature before. Don't turn me off, and above all—not for him."

"If you are serious," said she, much affected by this wild and passionate address, "you ought to feel, Lord George, that for me to listen to you here, and at such an hour as this,—child as I am, and long as we have known each other,—I ought not to do, I am sure. I love you, George," the tears stood in her eyes, "and I could do anything to make you happy; but if you mean .... if you intend, by what you say of our parents—I had better speak it out—yes, difficult as it is, I will. Don't, George, don't hope or expect anything from me; you will be disappointed if you do. My mother! I love her and reverence her; but in a matter such as this, no mother shall or can decide for me." And she turned away.

"What do you mean?" cried he, vehemently, following her. "You can't—you don't mean—

you are not *serious!* You are only trifling with me."

"I am not trifling, Heaven knows; and I must and will go."

"You shall not go till you have told me—do you? Ah, Heaven! don't say it...." looking earnestly into her face for a moment. "Yes, yes,—go away, go away; I see how it is. I want to hear no more from you; but yet I cannot believe that you do not, and will not love me. By Heaven! you shall *not* go till, at least, you tell me this."

"I will go, Lord George; I insist upon your opening the door instantly. I will hate you as long as you live if you don't."

"Nay, then," said he, mournfully, "if you hate me so much...." and he withdrew from the door. She opened it, and ran up stairs.

When there, she sat down to think; the impropriety of her present position pressed so strongly upon her mind, that she determined to speak to the Duchess on the subject of Lord George's conduct the next morning. To write to her mother and beg to be recalled home, would have

seemed to be a still more natural step; but to be called home was what Flavia dreaded. She knew her mother's violent and ungovernable temper too well; she knew how ardently she desired to see the large fortune her daughter inherited, enriching her own connections; she knew she should find no security from persecution on the subject of Lord George. Her sole dependance was upon the goodness and justice of the Duchess; but the justice and goodness, be it ever so great, of one so old and feeble, is but a frail dependance; and the thoughts of the poor young creature made a mournful circuit among her friends, and found but one to whom in her perplexity she could fly for sympathy and protection. She could in fancy fly to Caroline, as to some being of a higher nature than her own, and cry for support, and find it. And behind Caroline was figured one—kind, and tender, and considerate, and good; who would open his arms and shelter her, and she would be safe—shelter her from the injustice of her relations—from the perplexities, vexations, and unceasing worries of the world in which she lived, and the pursuit of the man she dreaded and feared.

The next day Flavia resolved to speak to the Duchess; but the next day the Duchess was attacked by one of her illnesses, and Flavia dared not agitate her by a conversation of this nature; all she could do, therefore, was to instal herself in the Duchess's room, and avoid meeting Lord George as much as possible.

CHAPTER VII.

Nor shall I to the work thou enterprisest
Be wanting, but afford thee equal aid.
MILTON.

THIS same morning two events happened at Mr. Wilmington's.

Whilst they were at breakfast the letters came in, and Mr. Wilmington, as usual, impatiently seized upon and began to distribute them.

"One overland from India," cried he, and opened it with impatience.

He read it at once with sparkling eyes.

"Heavens and earth! Harry, here's news!"

"What is that, sir?" said Henry, surprised at the exultation of his countenance.

"Nothing—nothing," said he, suddenly checking himself; and he thrust the letter into his pocket, rose, and left the room.

Henry's eyes followed him to the door, and then returned to his newspaper.

"Well," said Lizzy, "Mr. Wilmington is mighty close this morning. I wonder what his great news is. But, Harry, I have some news for you,—your favourite, Miss Flavia, is going to be married."

Henry did not start, he looked quietly up.

"I am not surprised to hear it, ma'am."

"And who do you think it is to?"

"To Lord George, ma'am, of course."

"Exactly so. I am assured they are absolutely engaged."

Henry looked at Caroline.

"I think it still very doubtful," said Caroline.

In the meantime, Mr. Wilmington retired to his own room, and read over and over again, with rapturous delight, this short and pithy letter:—

"DEAR CHUMMY,

That spec sounds well. Sorry you should lose such an opportunity of raising the wind. Show Estcourt we understand a trick or two yet; sorry I was not in England. I do hate that smooth-faced rascal. Draw on White and Batchelor, of Calcutta, for £100,000. Invest in t'other spec. Mind and secure the principal, and make as much for self and brats as you can. Wring the envious devil's heart, and let me see thee flashy and fine, my boy.

"G. CRAIGLETHORPE."

The matter in question was an immense mining speculation, of which Wilmington had received early intelligence, and in which he was wild to take a large share; but as he managed matters he could not easily command the requisite capital to accomplish this. He was impressed with the idea, also, that should he not be able to take

advantage of the offer made to him, his old rival, Estcourt, would be applied to, and he believed would be but too happy to seize upon the tempting opportunity. In this last supposition, however, I believe he was mistaken. He had, therefore, written, overland, to his old friend Mr. Craiglethorpe, who happened at this moment to be meditating the transfer of the large fortune which he had realised in the East to his native country. It was his desire, then, to end his days in the neighbourhood of the only two people he had ever cared for upon earth—namely, Albert Selwyn and Mr. Wilmington. It was believed that he wished to make a match between Albert and Caroline, in order to unite himself still more closely with the man to whom he had so unaccountably attached himself.

In truth, Wilmington possessed that incomprehensible influence over Craiglethorpe's mind, which a gay, headstrong, flashy character sometimes exercises over a dry, cold, and cynical one. Craiglethorpe had been Wilmington's godfather, and from his boyhood had felt an almost ludicrous pride and vanity in the fine person, fine features,

fine spirits, and, as he thought, fine manners of his godson.

On the other hand, Estcourt, who happened to have been educated at the same school with Wilmington, and, owing to connections of business, had been often thrown into communication with Craiglethorpe, managed to draw upon himself that gentleman's most hearty aversion; so that through the whole subsequent course of their lives, it had been his delight to maintain his brilliant favourite in opposition to his subtle, sneering, sarcastic rival. Estcourt possessed a real superiority of intellect and manners, that Craiglethorpe at once feared and detested; whilst Wilmington, with all his brilliancy, had unconsciously flattered the self-love of the humorist, by the real inferiority of his understanding.

Wilmington, on second thoughts, as we have seen, had forborne to communicate Mr. Craiglethorpe's important letter to Henry. He doubted whether his son would approve the risking so large a sum belonging to another, upon the doubtful speculation of mining; and though he assured himself that never was speculation so secure and

promising, a something whispered to him that he had better keep his intentions to himself.

So he ordered his horse, and rode down to the City alone, leaving Henry to finish his breakfast, and, finding his father had gone without him, to spend the morning with poor Selwyn.

Mr. Wilmington returned in the evening in the wildest spirits. The shares in the mining speculation were secured, and the one hundred thousand pounds invested. The promises of the proprietors were almost unlimited:—twenty, thirty, forty per cent. dividend upon the original capital subscribed was nothing—nothing the doubling, trebling, quadrupling, of the interest itself.

"Thursday fortnight is your ball, my dear Lizzy. There is plenty of time for preparation; and I give you one hint, en passant, you need not spare expense. Harry, my good fellow, don't look so deuced prudent; Golconda, my lad, what! if I

have secured a Golconda," and he tossed Craiglethorpe's letter to his son.

"What spec does he speak of?" said Henry, quietly.

"Why, what spec should he speak of but the Melwyn copper mines? What spec i'faith, but Golding's and Purchas;—secured twenty thousand shares this morning!"

"I hope not, sir—I hope not."

"You hope not! and why, in the devil's name, wiseacre?"

"I hope, sir, you have not risked Mr. Craiglethorpe's money in so perilous a speculation."

"Risked old Craigie's money! What ails the lad? Dost thou not see, silly one, or wilt thou not see, that Craigie himself approves of it? and I suppose, whatever may be your opinion of my judgment in these matters, you will not dispute his."

"Things are not as they are represented," persisted Henry; "and, indeed, my dear father ——"

"And, indeed, Henry," interrupted Lizzy, who, with her usual quickness as regarded all that concerned her own interests, had guessed the matter

in dispute; "I should think a father is likely to be a rather better judge of his own affairs, than his inexperienced son."

One of those common-places with which common-placers are accustomed, to endeavour to stop the mouths of the more farseeing and discerning.

"I should think a father is likely to be a better judge of his own affairs than his more inexperienced son."

"So generous a confidence!—so large a sum!—so doubtful a speculation! Oh, sir! I hope it it is not too late;—reflect a little. Caroline, Caroline!" She was painting at the other end of the large drawing-room. "Caroline, come to my assistance,—I may tell her, sir?" looking at his father; and without waiting for his permission, he gave her Craiglethorpe's letter. "So great! so generous a confidence!—Oh, sir! oh, father!"

"What the devil!" cried Wilmington, "is all this fuss about? Would you, in your wisdom, have me cast away such an opportunity of enriching us all for the rest of our lives? Why, I know he'd give me credit for thrice the sum. I tell you

they talk of forty per cent. dividends; only think of that! Our fortune is trebled,—the capital will quadruple itself. But I waste my breath," added he, passionately, "in arguing with such a poor, spiritless"—wretch, he was about to say; he condescended to alter it to "fellow as you."

Henry looked hurt, but he was not to be baffled.

"Speak, Caroline," he said.

"Father," said Caroline, going up to him, "forgive me. Do not risk this money. If it should be lost?"

"If it should be lost! as if it were likely to be lost."

"Henry thinks," persisted she gently.

"And what, in the name of all that's absurd," starting up in a rage, "does it signify to me what *Henry* thinks?—a poor, tame, spiritless, creature, without energy to do anything either for himself or others. Is he to guide me? Pretty doings, methinks;—a man like *me*, to be governed by a man like *him!* Pretty doings for all of us! Sitting moping there like a Miss Molly with his

hands before him. That's not *my* way, Miss Caroline."

"Indeed," put in Lizzy again, "I agree with you, Mr. Wilmington; it is rather too much to expect that your lofty spirit of enterprise should be checked by one. . . . . Really, Henry, I am astonished at you."

Mr. Wilmington was not an ill-natured, he was only an obstinate, shallow, brilliant fool; he glanced at the faces of his children, now filled with the most painful expression of anxiety; recovered his temper, laughed, and said,—

"Come, come, I forgive you both; so no more about it. Lizzy, my dear, all I have to beg is, that no expense may be spared upon your first ball. Estcourt will be there, and Lord George intends to honour us, I believe, and the Count and Countess Manvelle, and the Prince Paulinsky, and the Baron d'Avenheim, &c., &c., &c.; for love of Heaven, my dear, show your *savoir faire*. Let us have no miserable economies, no spoiling of a handsome entertainment by a little foolish saving. And these, ladies, are for your fair selves." And he presented an étui to each.

"La! my dear Mr. Wilmington, what a sweet set! I must indeed give you a kiss for this *petite galanterie;*" and she went up affectedly and kissed his forehead.

"What have you got, Caroline?"

Caroline opened her case.

"Beautiful things, indeed!" said Lizzy, in a tone through which a little ill-humour penetrated; "very handsome for an *unmarried* woman, I must say; they don't usually wear such things."

"Oh, Caroline always looked like a married woman," said Wilmington, laughing. "She looks ten years older than you do, Lizzy."

"Then no doubt it is all right. She ought to wear handsomer things than me."

"Handsomer! why, I thought yours were the handsomest, I'm sure; all I know is, they cost twice as much."

"Did they? I should not have thought it; but mine are, I see, very pretty."

"Pray," said Caroline, "take which you like best."

"Thank you. Oh! I dare say you like mine better now you hear what they have cost."

"No," said Caroline steadily, "I like those my father was so good as to choose for me the best; and as you do not want to change, I will keep them. Thank you, my dear father; but, but, ——

"But what, everlasting buts?" said he, peevishly.

"Do not buy any more ornaments for me. These are so handsome, that they will do for all my grand occasions for a century."

"I should think they might, indeed," said Lizzy, with an envious toss of her head.

"Well, ladies," said Mr. Wilmington; "I meant to please you both;—I am sorry I have not succeeded."

"Not succeeded! Oh, papa!" said Caroline, kissing his hand.

"I am sure I said I was very much obliged to you," said Lizzy, coldly; "but two sets of a morning will make Henry censure your extravagance, I fear."

She turned round, but Henry had left the room.

He entered that of Selwyn—that refuge for his perplexities and anxieties.

"What is the matter, my good fellow?" cried Selwyn, as he entered,—he looked so pale and distressed.

"Oh, Albert!" throwing himself into a chair, "what shall I do?"

"What is the matter, Henry?"

"So generous a confidence!" repeating the idea which had fastened upon his mind; "so dangerous a speculation!"

"What is the matter?" persisted Albert.

"Oh! Albert, if this money should be lost! I should shoot myself, I think."

"Tell me what is the matter."

With many interruptions and with exclamations unusual for him, Henry repeated his story, adding,

"My father knows my opinion of these men. I believe them to be unprincipled adventurers—he therefore never consulted me till it was too late—one hundred thousand pounds of another man's money! This eager desire of gain—this

careless extravagance—this indifference to all responsibility—this insensibility to all that is nice and honourable—oh, Albert!"

"Why," said Selwyn, "you need not trouble yourself so very much about it, Henry; my uncle is cruel rich, and if this money be lost will scarcely miss it. He has no children—nobody he cares for to inherit his vast fortune but my poor dying self. Besides, he is so fond of your father, that I verily believe he would rather lose by him, than gain by any other man. Suppose the worst, that he does lose it—before my uncle can have felt that loss, he will be richer by near a hundred and fifty thousand pounds, which I shall leave him. Barring a few legacies, every penny of mine will be his; he made it for my father and he shall have it again. It will just come in, I calculate, about the right time to stop the gap. This spec, as he calls it, will hold together, at all events, rather longer than this dust," looking at himself with a faint laugh.

An expression of the acutest pain was on the brow of Henry during this discourse of his friend.

He looked at Selwyn with eyes darkened over with sorrow, as they sadly wandered over the rapidly wasting form. At last he replied gravely:

"I do not think that which you have said makes the slightest difference in the right or the wrong of this affair. It is true, Mr. Craiglethorpe authorized my father to make use of the money in this way, but it was upon my father's own representation. The risk which he is running is desperate, and with another man's money,—and that man the most generous friend in the world—and all to gain a large sum for himself, which he cannot want except to gratify the wildest passion for expense, to gratify a silly..... I cannot endure it; I am miserable..... and then for consolation, what do you offer me? Oh, Selwyn! at what a price!"

"The price, my dear lad, must be paid at all events. I must shortly depart, it is plain. If you like it, I will mention all this in my will, and say I leave him my fortune as a compensation."

"No, my dear generous Albert, nothing can alter the right and the wrong of the affair," said Henry, sadly; "it is evil, and it will end in evil, depend upon it."

"But very likely we are vexing ourselves to no purpose," said Selwyn, wishing to cheer him. "How do you know? this grand spec may turn out very well, after all."

"No," said Henry, "I seem to have the fatal gift of Cassandra;—my evil forebodings, though they cannot persuade others, rarely deceive myself. I am certain all this will end ill."

"You are going to have grand doings on the 27th?" said Albert, to change the conversation.

"Yes, I believe so; Mrs. Wilmington gives a ball."

"She has sent me a card—I shall go."

"You don't mean it,—so late! Don't think of it."

"I shall come, depend upon it,—I must see my Caroline again. In a ball-room one is in more perfect solitude than in almost any place. I must see her in solitude, as I never, prisoner as I am,

can hope to see her elsewhere—I shall have some talk with her alone—it will be, perhaps, the last time. If I were to die in consequence, I should have bought that happiness cheaply—so I shall come."

CHAPTER VIII.

Why love among the virtues is not known;
It is, that love contrasts them all in one.

DONNE.

THURSDAY night, the 27th, arrived, and the rooms began to fill; and there was Lizzy, receiving her company. She was in a dress of the richest satin and blonde, decorated with bouquets of jewels. On her fine hair, a wreath of diamonds; her fine features, her fine figure displayed to the greatest advantage. Yet, handsome as she looked, how many things were wanting! Everything that constitutes the soul of beauty was wanting there. There was an emptiness, a certain washiness of

colours, if I may say so; a feebleness in the outlines, a drawling affected coldness of manner and gesture which contrasted strongly with the olive tints of Caroline's face, her serene noble brow, her dark calm eyes, her figure such as the pencil of a Caracci might have drawn;—and with Flavia, sparkling, living, feeling, delicate, playful Flavia.

Mr. Wilmington was, as usual, elegantly, but too youthfully dressed. The whiteness of his hand, on which one fine diamond was sparkling; the richness of his dress, the soft colours just peeping out from beneath his waistcoat; the beauty of his fine brown hair, his tall and slender figure, and the gaiety of his whole appearance, made him look scarcely five-and-thirty.

Henry was there, vainly endeavouring to dispel the melancholy which depressed his spirits. He was plainly dressed, almost below the occasion; as a man dresses whose whole soul is absorbed in other things. He seemed scarcely even to listen to Flavia, who *will* chatter to him.

Selwyn had already arrived,—the interesting, dying Selwyn,—languid, attenuated; a form already, as it were, spiritualized. His large mournful eyes

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are fixed upon his Caroline. Caroline, more moved than she had ever been before,—moved to a deep, earnest tenderness for the fated and unfortunate young man (for Henry had taken care to repeat his last conversation to her),—sat on the sofa by him, talking to him with a sort of soft gravity, pouring forth those treasures of mind which, in conversation with her intimate friends, she displayed in such an eminent degree:—and Selwyn was happy.

Mr. Wilmington kept glancing at them from time to time, satisfying himself that the hundred and fifty thousand pounds was already in his family —already *his;* for it was his habit to consider as resources all that belonged to those he can influence.

Lizzy was so occupied with herself, that she has not time to make remarks; only she thought Flavia's dress very plain, and was half-inclined to be offended at it. For Flavia had no ornaments on her pale blue dress, only three roses in her hair; no jewels but her eyes, those sweet bright eyes, more than usually bright; for Flavia had already forgotten her troubles, and, by the side

of Henry, felt so safe and happy that she remembered not that evenings must have an end, or that there is a Lord George in the world.

And so the room fills with great people and with little people—tall people and short people—fair people and brown people—rich people and poor people,—agreeing only in these two particulars, that, rich or poor, tall or short, great or little, all are, without exception, very well dressed, and all are young. All are handsome, too, I think, whenever I look at a well-filled ball-room.

Lizzy opened the ball, and Caroline followed. Then came princes and princesses, countesses and counts, barons and baronesses innumerable, a very few English titles, and a profusion of that immense *oi polloi* of English society, those swarms of rich people, who drive their carriages, live in handsome houses, give handsome dinners and gay balls, and form the mass in every gay crowd. They eat, they flutter, they enjoy, and die. Mr. Wilmington's rooms swarmed with such; and a very good-looking, well-dressed, happy-looking set of people they were. But they did not satisfy Wilmington's craving ambition for fashion, more especially when

Estcourt—for a sort of hollow peace having been cooked-up with his late friends, Mr. Wilmington could not forego the pleasure of parading his magnificence before his late rival—more especially when Estcourt, his eye-glass stuck in his eye, might be seen walking up and down, muttering to himself, loud enough to be heard by everybody, "Very handsome entertainment—beautiful rooms—Gad, very pretty, nice-looking girls—nobody one knows—Who's that?—Miss Freeman! who's she? Pretty black eyes there."

"That," said Wilmington, "is Miss L——, the Duchess of B——'s granddaughter."

"Ha! a pretty little fairy. Her grandfather was in Gordon's house, I think? A mésalliance—did they ever forgive it?"

"She is staying with the Duchess now."

"So, so! Is the old Dowager here?"

"No; too ill to come."

"So I thought.—Who's that?"

"That's Lord George."

"George—Lord George who? There are a good many of these Lord Georges."

"Lord George D——."

"A fine-looking young man. Seems particularly attentive to his partner, and particularly inattentive to everybody else. Just the way with these young sparks of fashion. What brought him here?"

"He's a distant connection of ours—did you not know?" said Wilmington, writhing under these petty nettle-whippings.

"Oh!"

And this is what Wilmington got for his money, when he laid it out to dazzle Mr. Estcourt.

"You do not even look at me, Flavia," said Lord George. "Your whole attention is wandering; you don't even hear what I say."

"Yes, I do. I am listening."

"And looking always another way."

"No, I am not," turning her eyes towards him; for Henry, on whom she had been gazing intently, and who had been in conversation with Estcourt, just now quitted the room.

"What is it that fills your thoughts? For I am sure," said he again, after once more vainly endeavouring to make her converse; "I am sure there must be some cause for your unusual preoccupation and silence."

"Well, then," impatiently, "I was thinking how unjust is fate."

"Very deep and new that. And pray what instance of her injustice might present itself just now to your philosophical speculations? My own hard, cruel destiny, I should think, would furnish an excellent example."

"Yours!"

"Yes, mine; for you hate me."

"Yours! You do not know what care or sorrow is,—you young men of fashion! You know nothing of realities."

"Realities! Where did you get that word?"

"Real care, real sorrow, disappointment, death," said she, now turning her eyes from the place where Henry had disappeared to the spot where Selwyn, exhausted and ill, was buried in an arm-chair, exhausted, and panting for breath.

"Upon my soul, Flavia, you are too bad. I shall hate him next."

"How ill he looks! I will go to him."

"Upon my word you improve. Pray go and pet him before the whole room. He has eight thousand a-year—a fine jointure, and soon to be had."

"Contemptible! Always money,—money. Mean motives; mean ideas," muttered she.

She glided, however, away, and got to Selwyn.

"Mr. Selwyn, you look very tired. This room is too hot for you. Will you not go into another?"

"I am tired," said he; "but it is not that. Where is Henry gone?"

"I don't know; he has left the room."

"That odious Estcourt, that bird of ill-omen, has been whispering to him. I saw them together. Something has vexed Henry. I want to speak to him, and yet I feel afraid to stir; for, to own the truth," coughing, "I feel unequal to pushing through that crowd at the door. Yet something is amiss, I am sure."

"Shall I go and see where he is, and try to bring him to you?" said Flavia.

"Do, my dear," said the sick man, with the paternal familiarity of sickness. Sickness gives the privileges of old age. "And, Flavia, tell him from me, whatever is the matter, to return to the room now. He must summon his fortitude; it is necessary."

She glided away, slid through the gay crowds that thronged the door of the drawing-room, entered another, gaily lighted, but almost deserted, passed through another emptier still, and entered the boudoir, faintly illuminated from the other rooms; for the lights, by some negligence, had here been suffered to burn so dimly, that it was as twilight, after the brilliancy of the others.

He was on a low settee, his hands covering his face.

She stepped softly up to him.

"My dear Henry, what is the matter?"

He lifted up his head. His expression was miserable.

"Flavia! What are you come here for?"

"We have missed you, Henry. Selwyn misses you. He asked me to come and look for you. Something is the matter, he is sure. He begs you not to go away in this manner. He begs you to collect your spirits and fortitude. He begs——"

"I am ashamed of myself," said Henry, rousing himself. "I ought to blush for my weakness. But, oh, Flavia! there are moments too much for the fortitude of any man; how much more so for that of such a poor, poor creature as I am!"

"Don't speak in that way, Henry. It is unworthy of you thus to undervalue yourself. Whatever man can do I am sure will be done by you, in every circumstance. But why are you so very unhappy?"

"My Flavia!" lifting up eyes of such melancholy tenderness, that her very heart was melted; "my Flavia, there is much to make me feel anxious and perplexed; but one word from you. Fool that I am.... My sweetest.....Forgive me, Flavia; I heard some bad news, to-night."

"From that Estcourt. Don't plague yourself about what *he* says. What is this horrid money

matter, which worries and teazes you all so? Dear Henry, you at least should be above it."

"Alas! the money!....but the pit of inextricable difficulties into which he is plunging—his friend's confidence—his honour, his credit—in jeopardy. Merciful Heaven! what will become of it all?"

"All what, Henry? don't look so wretched."

"And then to see you..... But what right have I to think of you, ruined as we shall be—as we are? Flavia, I have no right to think of you; and yet—and yet, whilst my ears were drinking in this wretched information, to see you—oh, Flavia! to see you! This was, this is too much for me."

"What wretched information do you speak of? tell *me*, Henry. You used to tell your little Flavia everything."

"*My* little Flavia! Alas, alas! those times are past for ever; yet pity me, Flavia. My father has risked money not his own, and it is now almost certain that he will lose it; and if so, that he will never be able to repay it; and his rectitude and honour are at stake. And I, his son,

can neither avert the evil, nor assist him to meet its consequences. I am a poor, helpless, spiritless being! Even at this very moment, when the situation of his affairs demands my undivided energy, my very heart is dying within me for griefs altogether my own. I *am* a poor creature, as he called me."

"Henry, Henry!" said she, sitting down by him; and, trying to uncover his face, she gently pulled his hands away. There was the artless innocence of an affectionate little child in all her proceedings. "Look up, dear Henry; don't be so miserable;—look up. Cannot I do something? I believe I am to have a great deal of this tiresome money some time; it is all at your service, dear Henry, if that will do any good."

He could not bear this; he pushed away her hands.

"Help me! No, no; nothing you can do."

She was hurt at this, and the tears came into her eyes.

"This is very unkind. You are like the rest. I thought you would never be unkind to me."

"Was I unkind? Oh, Flavia!"

"Everybody vexes me; but I thought you and Caroline would never be unkind—I thought I was safe from trouble with you."

"Trouble! But you will soon have a protector who adores you."

"I! who?"

"Lord George."

"Lord George! Never, never! *He* protect me! he torments and distresses me, till I don't know what to do. And you, Henry, my only friend, you are like the rest,—so unkind to me!"

"Unkind to thee, my Flavia! Oh! that I might open these arms to shelter thee for ever!"

He opened them, and she sank upon his breast.

She did not think—she did not know—it was one sweet impulse with them both. Not one word was spoken;—one close embrace, heart to heart, and it was as if they had been betrothed for years.

Flavia soon recovered herself; and then they sat together on the sofa, hand in hand, conversing with the sweet, almost conjugal confidence of those who know neither distrust nor reserve;

Henry's heart flooding over with peace and joy; Flavia tranquil and blest. The fluttering, frightened dove had found its home; the beating heart, the trembling spirits, were hushed to a sweet repose.

He spoke of his perplexities and anxieties, and found that sweet sympathy, and that ready comprehension, which a plain, sensible, and very feeling man asks from his more susceptible and lively partner;—that species of instinctive quickness of apprehension, and ready judgment, with which the attachment to a wise and worthy man seems at once to endow a lively and intelligent girl. And she rejoiced, as it is the nature of woman to rejoice, in the force and capacity of that spirit, which by its influence seemed at once to enlarge and strengthen, whilst it controlled her own.

Sweet, beneficent provision of nature! Eden of the world! Yes, Paradise is there.

To tread the thorny paths of this world together—to endure its inevitable sorrows, and struggle with its cares and difficulties—to fight the good fight of virtuous duty—to weep over the

griefs, and alleviate the sufferings of their kind—to rear in that atmosphere of love, young fair creatures that shall succeed in that worthy enterprize—to grow grey in cordial undiminished affection, and to lay their heads in one common grave,—such was the prospect this young gay creature had imagined to herself in a union with the excellent Henry; to this hope this rosy, laughing fairy sacrificed all those brilliant seductions of rank, fashion, elegance, and beauty, so dangerous to imaginations of eighteen. And why? Because she had an excellent heart and an excellent understanding,—the result of lively parts, ingenuous innocence, and, above all, of a wise unsophisticated education.

But the sound of the distant music, and of the many twinkling feet, penetrates into this apartment; and Henry is the first to remember their singular situation on this evening of gaiety and magnificence.

"My sweet one," said he, with his own gentle smile, "we have brought ourselves into an awkward situation enough; how are we to get back into the ball-room?"

"Caroline will help us," said she; "you go away first. Send Caroline to me, and I will come in again upon her arm."

"I suppose that will be best," rising most slowly and unwillingly; and he dragged himself, rather than walked, into the splendid dancing-room.

Selwyn had been anxiously watching for his return, or some signal from Flavia; but when Henry entered the room, he could scarcely believe he was the same man who had quitted it—his countenance seemed beautified—that expression can only give you an idea of the glow of happiness that shone with a brightness and serenity almost divine, over every feature—care, anxiety, those dark troubled lines which marred his likeness, had vanished—the clouds had rolled away—the blue serene of heaven had settled there. What were all the cruel surmises and suspicions of Estcourt to him now? Lord George whispered in the ear of Flavia no longer—the future was as one eternal sunshine—yet, with that strange avarice of happiness which belongs to melancholy and disappointed characters, it seemed as if Henry

delayed imparting his felicity even to his best friend. Those who are rarely very happy—and that is perhaps the case with all characters of great sensibility—seem to have a dread of marring such exquisite moments by the addition of the simplest new circumstance; so Henry evaded Selwyn through a sort of fancy of this kind; and not observing the questioning, astonished eyes of his friend, merely went up to Caroline and said, "Go directly into the boudoir, my dear; you are wanted;" and then he walked quietly among the company, and performed the part of son of the house, with an ease quite new to him—a sense of internal dignity and self-respect, which, though he well deserved to feel, he never before had felt, raising him at once to the place he so eminently deserved to occupy.

Selwyn looked at him with pleasure and surprise; he had always lamented a certain want of ease and dignity in the manners of his friend, and this metamorphosis was as agreeable as unaccountable.

Henry was soon engaged in dancing, whilst Estcourt looked on and marvelled. Was this the

anxious, low-spirited Henry, whom the communications he had this night made were calculated to fill with the most distracting anxieties? Was it possible that this young man possessed, after all, so much courage and spirit, as to resist and triumph, at this important moment, over the dark influences of his threatening fortune? to maintain so calm an exterior—such cheerfulness in his countenance, and a manner equally removed from depression of spirits—or from the exaggerated gaiety which is sometimes, assumed to cover depression of spirits.

Estcourt was compelled to honour, in the sensitive Henry, a victory, which his own *sinewy* cast of temper could scarcely have achieved.

Meantime, Lord George was roaming about searching for his little favourite, his little love, as he called her to himself, in fond appropriation; for, in spite of all Flavia did, or could say, he persisted in believing her to be his own. At last she appeared, leaning on the arm of Caroline, and how changed also! There was an ineffable softness, an eye downcast, a bending head, a slow stealing step, an air of diffidence, yet of

content, which had succeeded to the gay vivacity of an hour ago. But neither did she seek Selwyn; she went to a distant corner of the room, and there sat down behind a knot of people, evidently wishing to escape observation.

A pang shot through the bosom of Lord George, —he felt that she was lost to him for ever.—The instinct of love rarely deceives.—He, however, pushed his way to her, and said, in a hurried voice,—

"I am going away, good night."

She lifted up her eyes, and saw his changed and fallen countenance.

"Going away so soon?"

"Is it not time? I see it all, Flavia. Forgive my vain hopes, my mad persecutions. I do not pretend to blame you; you have been in the same story throughout.—God bless you!"

CHAPTER IX.

First got with guile, and then preserved with dread,
And after spent with pride and lavishness.

SPENSER.

It would appear that the evil auguries respecting the mining business, with which Mr. Estcourt had tormented Harry upon the evening of the ball, were not altogether so well founded as that gentleman's impressions usually were. Many months passed away, and things continued in a promising condition.

The engagement of Harry and Flavia was made public. The good old Duchess sighed, but forebore to remonstrate. The mother was not so

passive; she not only remonstrated, but stormed, —not only argued, but railed.

She came up immediately to London, and spared no argument, good or bad, that might persuade or intimidate her daughter; but all in vain, Flavia's resolution was not to be shaken. Had the mother tried gentler means, the sufferings of this good little girl, in resisting her will, would have been greatly increased; but even this better mode would have failed to produce the desired effect; her affection for Henry she felt to be a worthy sentiment, and she was supported by a strong sense of right, in opposing the value of such a character as his, to the more brilliant advantages held out to her, by a connection with others;—the only revenge, therefore, that her mother could take upon Henry, for being the favoured object of the daughter's choice, was by the exercise of an authority committed to her under her husband's will.

By this will it was provided, that in case Flavia married without her mother's consent, the disposition of the settlements should be entirely in her parent's power. That she should not, in that

case, be considered as coming of age till she was twenty-five; and that during her minority the income she was to receive should be regulated by her mother's judgment. Vain provisions! as are too many of those through which beings, no longer taking a part in the changing affairs of this world, endeavour still to interfere in their regulation.

By these provisions, intended to act as some check upon the rashness of inexperienced youth, it came to pass, that a most admirable and judicious choice was punished instead of being rewarded, that a wise and virtuous man was not allowed to interfere, in the slightest degree, in the final destination of a very large property; and that a violent, narrow-minded, selfish woman held the welfare as far as money was concerned, of two generations, almost entirely in her power.

Yet, what shall we say? The intention of the father was excellent. To restrain, in some degree, the power of one he did not know,—his child, by the experience of one he did know,—his wife: or rather, that he thought he knew; for, blinded by his partiality, by the smiles of beauty,

and the grace of fine manners, he did not discern the cold, selfish temper hidden under all these fascinating appearances. However, reflections apart, poor little Flavia was disappointed in her generous wish of rescuing Henry from those embarrassments in which, through the wilful blindness of Mr. Wilmington, it seemed, that sooner or later, the family must be involved. Nor could she, by making him master of her princely income, render him completely independent of such circumstances. A very moderate sum was to be allowed her till she came of age, and every farthing of her property was to be settled upon her children, to the total exclusion of her husband; the greatest part of it upon an eldest son,—should she bear a son,—and little insignificant portions allotted to younger children; thus rendering this large fortune as inefficient for the purposes of family happiness as a large fortune could possibly be made; for, without questioning the wisdom, or even the justice, of preserving a long line of eldest sons in long established or very wealthy families, few, we should hope in these days of reason rather than imagination, but perceive the barbarous inhu-

manity of portioning off younger children, and especially daughters, in a manner entirely inconsistent with their position and habits; entailing upon them thereby all the miseries of poverty and dependence, or all the inevitable meannesses of husband-hunting or place-hunting.

The marriage was also delayed by every possible obstacle being thrown in the way; but the happiness the young people found in each other, neither lawyers nor an unjust parent could destroy. The summer and the winter passed by in the interchange of a tenderness and confidence which compensated to Henry for the anxieties and sufferings created by the follies of others.

Mr. Wilmington in the meantime pursued his course of vanity undaunted; nay, at a pace accelerated by the brilliant good fortune, as he esteemed it, of his son. He was excessively proud of this engagement, and of the connection which it seemed distantly to open to him with that higher sphere of fashion to which his ambition was ever directed. Lizzy, partly jealous and partly proud of this new relationship, endeavoured to make her part in the general elevation good by a mag-

nificence that caused a sensation even in London, where, perhaps, after all, it is not very difficult, with a little address and a superabundance of money, to "get on," as people say.

Lizzy was presented; and her dress upon that occasion was splendid,—looped up with knots of emeralds and diamonds, and a stomacher, "quite unique," according to the papers. Some of these emeralds and diamonds, it is true, were *hired;*—even Mrs. Wilmington could not pretend to purchase all; but as she managed matters, money enough went to jewellers and milliners to send more stock or more shares into the market.

Mrs. Wilmington, it must be confessed, looked beautiful in her court dress, and her beauty was remarked even in the galaxy of a birthday. People began to remember how they had met them abroad; and more than one noble personage or another found an excuse to call. Mrs. Wilmington's dinners were celebrated for their splendour. Wit followed rank to her table, and illustrious men of genius might be found seated there. Even Estcourt was glad to obtain an invitation; Ude recommended a cook; a butler and a house-

keeper were provided from some aristocratical establishment, whence they had been civilly dismissed with well-filled pockets and more than suspicion of peculation, and were but too happy to save the elegant Mrs. Wilmington from the contamination of vulgar cares. The whole was wound up by a ball, so far excelling the one of the preceding year, that it was declared to be *the* ball of the season.

It is not necessary to detail further the way that money went, nor need the anxieties and heart-bitterness of Henry and his sister be painted. July came;—the display was at last over. Mrs. Wilmington's visiting list was crowded with noble and fashionable names; but property to a large amount had been sold, and the mining speculation began to show symptoms of justifying the worst anticipations formed upon the subject. Immense dividends for eighteen months,—dividends, alas! which had been spent as received,—diminished by degrees. At last the crash came;—disclosures the most iniquitous were made public, and in place of Mr. Craiglethorpe's hundred thousand pounds a handful of transfers, that could be

transferred to no one, was all that remained in Mr. Wilmington's hands, save what remained of his own private fortune, into the amount of which he dared not inquire.

CHAPTER X.

Though he his house of polished marble build,
Yet shall it ruin like the moth's frail cell,
Or shed's of reeds, which summer's heat repel.
SANDYS.

"A PRETTY affair that fine genius Wilmington has made of his Melwyn Mine," said Estcourt to Jones, one morning. "Purchas and Golding are flown—off—gone to America. We shall see my Lord Wilmington in the Fleet, after all."

"Pooh, pooh," said Jones; "not so bad as that, we will hope. Henry has carried off the pretty Welch heiress."

"Ay, ay, the young fellow has taken good care of himself."

"My father! where's my father?" cried Henry, rushing up stairs, with looks black as midnight. "Father—Mr. Wilmington," opening hastily the door of every room in succession.

Mr. Wilmington was at last discovered in his dressing-room, with his tailor, busily engaged in discussing the merits of a new waistcoat, in which he was to appear at my Lady T's fête, at Richmond; a first invitation.

"Good heavens!" cried Henry, when he saw him thus engaged. "Good heaven!—sir!—father!"

"And so, Mr. Tibbs," continued Mr. Wilmington, to the spruce gentleman, who held a book of patterns in his hand; "and so, Mr. Tibbs, gold brocade will not do?"

"If I might be allowed to venture to dispute a taste so universally acknowledged to be just as Mr. Wilmington's, I should say this pattern was more the thing for a sort of *déjeuner*, which, after all, is the style of this fête, and more especially——"

"Father," said Henry, "three words with you in private."

"Ten thousand, in ten minutes. Well, then, send in both; I will take the one I like best at the time; the fancy of the moment is everything with me. I wish you good morning, Mr. Tibbs."

"Good morning, sir," and with due deliberation, folding up his patterns, the tailor left the coast clear for the agitated Henry.

"My dearest father," he began.

"Well, my very good son. What the deuce, Henry, must you be in such a hurry for? Surely your news may wait—post, post haste—what's the matter?"

"Oh! my dear sir, prepare yourself for the worst."

"Worst! worst? What worst?" impatiently. "What are you about, sir?—pale and red, pale and red, fifty times in a minute."

"It's all gone! It's all lost!" burst, at last, in a sort of shout from Henry's overcharged heart: and quite overcome, he sank back into a chair, and burst into a torrent of tears.

"What the d—l's in the poor lad?" said the

father, touched by his emotion. "What's the matter, Harry?"

"Oh, father! oh, sir!—the bubble has burst at last. All escaped; and Purchas and Golding are off to America. There will not be a sixpence; and the money! the money!"

Mr. Wilmington was sobered at last! the shock arrested him in the full intoxication of his vanity.

"You don't say so, Harry?—and they talk of Craigie coming home," added he, in a low voice.

He looked very pale; he trembled at the thought; he was at heart very much afraid of the old man he had duped.

"But you know, Harry, it was at his own desire, and by his own consent, that I embarked in this capital scheme. What have the rascals been about? You know, Harry, Craigie ought to remember that any man may be duped by a set of rascals. Hey, Harry?"

"True," said his son; "but," recovering himself, he rose and laid his hand upon his father's arm: "you know, sir, the money must be re-

placed. You know it was entrusted to you upon your own representations, coloured by an imagination which saw advantages no one else could discern in this scheme. Had Mr. Craiglethorpe been aware of the precise state of the case, one cannot for a moment believe——"

"Well, well, don't preach as if you were a methodist parson. Come to the point, like a man. What do you mean?"

"The money must be repaid," said Henry, steadily.

"Not a doubt of it, my dear fellow; every penny of it, when old Craigie comes home. It is, after all, only a debt of honour;—but I am a gentleman, sir."

"My beloved father!" and Henry, his whole countenance lighted up as with a sudden glory of joy, seized and kissed his father's hand with unspeakable emotion,—the unspeakable joy of such a being as he was, on discovering in another a rectitude of principle which he had not dared to anticipate. No subterfuges, no vain excuses, no hesitations, no evasions. Not a doubt of it, my dear fellow, his father had said; and Harry passed

at once from the horrors of the most painful distrust to the ecstasies of security.

Mr. Wilmington guessed a little at what was passing in his son's mind. To estimate the depth and intensity of his feelings was far beyond him; but he saw the change, and with gratified vanity he continued—

"Could you for a moment think it possible, Harry, that your father would suffer himself to lie under monied obligations, even to his dearest friend? These are feelings, my lad, which only gentlemen understand, ... not to be thought of for an instant. I would not condescend to be indebted in this manner even to my Sovereign. Craigie is a good fellow; but I would not lie under such an obligation to him for the universe,—hang me if I would."

"My dear father, all you say is true; and common justice and honesty in this case will require sacrifices which no man will be more ready than myself, when the moment arrives, to make."

"Sacrifices!—pshaw! No man despises these things more than myself. 'A crust of bread and a hollow tree.' How runs it Harry? 'My mind to

me a kingdom is.' I flatter myself no man on earth can bow to necessity more gracefully than I can. Ha, Harry, I have not studied philosophy in vain!"

"Sacrifices will be necessary," reiterated Henry. "We will hope much from a speedy retrenchment. The sum is large; but with your fortune, sir——"

"Oh, pooh, do what you will. Make all the necessary retrenchments. Where shall we begin? Sell off the greys, aye, and get rid of the new purchase at Brighton? Lizzy must do without her marine villa this summer."

"I will, if you will give me leave, father. Just make a state of your property, and we shall soon see what will be necessary to be done. I am delighted to see you take it so cheerfully, dear father."

"Ho, lad, when did'st ever see thy father upset? Thou'st not quite so tough;—thy poor mother in thee. She was always a bit of a whimperer, poor soul. But never mind, boy, thy father will find spirit for both. We'll dine at home to-day, and try the new Burgundy, and,

nose and knees over the fire, we will have a set-to, and see what's to be done; for I shall think that I see old Craigie's wizen face grinning at me—an old hunks—till he has got his precious bills back again."

There was not much time for preparation; but Henry sat down in his own room, and making a hasty memorandum of his father's scattered property, he proceeded to note down the retrenchments and sacrifices which would be necessary.

As the clock struck eight, he entered his father's dining-room with a sort of cheerful composure of face and manner, softened by something peculiarly tender as he addressed him. They were a mere family party,—Lizzy in an elegant wrapper, preparatory to dressing for the evening; Caroline in a morning-dress on the same account.

Mr. Wilmington was in excellent spirits. He felt more than usually satisfied with himself; for, in spite of his vanity and conceit, genuine self-approbation was after all a rare feeling with him. There was something quite pleasant in the expression of his countenance as he sat opposite to his pretty young wife with his son by his side.

Usually he was only occupied with her in these little family parties; but for once the son obtained all his attention; and it was a pleasing sight to see the two sitting together, talking in that low, confidential tone, though upon common topics, which is such a warrant of cordiality between near connections.

As for Henry, his whole heart seemed overflowing with affectionate reverence; while a tender consideration, springing from a secret sentiment of pity, displayed itself in all his actions. Fondest lover was never more attentive than he. The beautiful picture in Robinson Crusoe, when Friday discovers his long lost father, was here reproduced in the different colours of a different life. Henry had as it were found a father. The choicest morsels were selected and pressed upon him,—his glass filled by his son's hand. Henry seemed jealous lest any one should serve his father but himself.

So overflows an excellent heart, when it thinks it has wronged another—so sweet a joy irradiates the angel over the sinner that repenteth. Mr. Wilmington sat leaning back in his chair, in rather an interesting attitude, as he thought both

expressive of thought and feeling, drinking in by large draughts this sweetest incense that he had ever perhaps received even in his flattered life.

"Well, Caroline," said the young wife, as she was about to finish her dessert; "these gentlemen have it all to themselves, have not they? However, when shall you be ready for Lady Methuen's ball, my dear Wilmington? I shall not be later then eleven; she is such an antiquated old thing, and hates late hours. Harry, my dear, when shall you be ready?"

"Harry and I don't go out to-night," said Mr. Wilmington, with an air of mysterious importance.

"La! now; why not? you positively must," smiled the wife.

"Caroline, these naughty idle creatures won't go out. Why don't you scold them?"

Caroline's eyes were fixed upon her father with an air of approbation and sympathy.

"Come, Miss Caroline," said the petted young lady; "do you hear, or do you not hear?"

"I hear," said Caroline.

"Well, are we to understand we are to go out

alone? I hate that," said Lizzy, peevishly. "If I had thought you did not mean to escort us, I would have got somebody else. You must go, one of you; I can't, and I won't go into a room, only two petticoats together!"

"My dear," said Mr. Wilmington, with a dignified air, "you must upon this occasion excuse me. Business of importance detains us at home; and I must beg, my love," continued he, "that when I say business of importance, I may meet with no difficulties .... A wife ———"

"Business of importance," pouting; "a wife, indeed! .... Pretty consideration a wife gets!" half aside, "Children are all in all here—I'll be bound Caroline knows what the mighty business of importance is: it is only a secret to me."

"It will very soon be no secret to any one, my dear madam," said Harry.

His father gave him a wink.

"No use publishing things," whispered he; "as well tell the whole town as her. I'll put her on another scent. My dear Lizzy, what can you care about law points and lawyers? Do let Harry's settlement be bothered out between us

without putting your pretty fingers into such a fire."

Harry felt a disagreeable something creep all over him at this speech. Caroline cast down her eyes. These candid and honourable young people shrank with pain, even from an evasion.

"La! is that it? I wish we might ever come to an end of Harry's wedding! We shall be, all of us, sick of it, I foresee, before this fine heiress, you make such a fuss about, is fairly housed; and I should not wonder if she gave you the slip, good folks, after all. Cup and the lip many a slip. Time enough for slips here. No one knows what may happen. Lord George is come back from Italy, I hear, so Master Harry had better look sharp;" and with a little ill-natured laugh she rose, and, followed by Caroline, left the room.

The blood gathered cold round Harry's heart. But he resisted the pain, or rather he ordered, he compressed it down, as it were, with the unflinching resolution of a martyr. This was no time to think of his own sacrifices. He rose, placed a comfortable chair by the fire for his father, a

small table by its side, took the fresh bottle of the capital Burgundy, set it down there, with a couple of glasses, drew a small chair for himself by Mr. Wilmington's side, took a paper out of his pocket, and unfolding it, fixed his eyes with the kindest interest upon his father's face, and thus began :—

"I am afraid, my dear sir, you will be somewhat shocked and disappointed, as I was at first, at the result of this statement; but your noble, honourable feelings, my dear father, will support you, and would support you under sacrifices far greater than, I trust, you will be called upon to make."

"Let's see, boy. Never fear me. One stroke of my pen, and it's done. What's property to honour?—trash! stuff! 'Tis mine, 'tis yours.' What says the poet? Ha, Harry! Not quite forgot my Shakspeare, nor my Virgil, ridertes, what is it?"

"I have on this side," pursued Harry, "made a short estimate of all the property that I believe you are now possessed of. It will be lucky, my dear sir," with a faint laugh, "if you can correct

me here, and add a few items; for I am afraid we shall find ourselves rather short."

Mr. Wilmington ran his eye hastily to the bottom of the page, then turned the leaf, but at next page a blank! There was nothing more. "Ninety-eight thousand pounds!" said he.

He then began leisurely to peruse the several items as they stood in the list, breathing, "Pooh! nonsense! You have forgotten half."

Harry's eyes were fixed upon his father, anxiously waiting for something more.

"And the villa at Brighton?" began Wilmington.

"Not paid for. The purchase is not completed," said Harry.

"Pooh! but it shall be completed. I am to give six thousand pounds for it. I'll bet you fifty to one I sell it the next day for ten."

Harry shook his head.

"You don't mean to say I shan't. Pooh! it's impossible you can have got half down here. Ninety-eight thousand pounds; why, I'm worth at least two hundred and fifty."

"Where?" said his son.

"Nonsense! where? I know I am. Why, those rascals Estcourt and Jones paid me down ninety thousand on the nail, didn't they?"

"Yes, sir, it was paid to your account at your banker's."

"And, you idiot! the balance at my banker's is never noted."

"The balance is against you, sir."

"Impossible!—won't believe it!—some error, some gross error. What the deuce! you don't mean to say I have spent ninety thousand pounds in eighteen months? Why, I have hardly spent so many hundreds. What's the use of making the worst of things, as you invariably do, Harry; what's the use, I say?"

"There was a large balance against you when that money was paid in; then there was that purchase you made in Devonshire, sir. I am afraid there will be a considerable loss upon it. I have put down the value as at thirty thousand, you see; I fear it will not fetch more; it was a fancy purchase, sir."

"Fancy!—no fancy. I gave fifty thousand for

it, I know; and are these all the shares I possess in the Y. and G.?"

"I fear so."

"I don't believe a word of your account, sir."

"My dearest father, consider. What is there to be added?"

"I don't know, and I don't care. But please then to tell me what I am to do."

"You are prepared to make great sacrifices," began Henry. "Father, you said——"

"What the deuce matters it what I said? Do you think I expected to see my property chopped, and snipped, and cut to nothing by your d——d way of calculating? Look now, this very house in which we are now sitting, you have put it down at fifteen thousand pounds. Pshaw! as if it were not as well worth twenty-five thousand pounds as twenty-five copper farthings."

"It will be all the better if it prove so."

"Prove so! Why, you don't think I'm going to sell my house, do you? Are you stark mad, Harry? Sell my house, indeed!"

"This house, sir, is so very expensive a one,

that I thought you would think it better to dispose of it at once. Perhaps the one at Roehampton may, with a prudent economy, yet be retained," said Henry, in a deprecating tone.

"Retained! Bless your soul!—why you don't think I'm going to sell *that* too? and what am I to do for a town house, pray? Go into Russell-square, I suppose—catch me doing that! A pretty feeling you have for your father—I ask him to arrange some plan of rational retrenchment for me, and the first thing the blockhead proposes is to turn me into the street. But I'll see old Craigie and his hundred thousand pounds at old Nick first! What business had he to push me into that d——d concern? If he had not been so ready lending his confounded money, I should not have thought of it. Extravagant nonsense! Romantic, ridiculous stuff! Turn myself into the street, indeed!"

Henry sat leaning forward, his eyes with an expression of sad dismay continuing fixed upon his father.

"The money must be paid you know, father," he reiterated.

"I know that as well as you do yourself, and it shall be paid. You need not bother yourself about that—mighty easy to be so ready with other people's money. Not much matter to Master Harry what becomes of the rest of us, he's got the Welch heiress."

"But then, how do you propose to do it?" said Harry, sticking to his point, and despising the taunt.

"By degrees," said his father, "as any one but a ninny would advise, one should think. I shall make retrenchments—I shall sell that villa at Brighton,—I told you I would, and the property in Devonshire—an expensive whim enough of Lizzy's—that will be sixty thousand of the money at least. Then she must lay down her phaeton, and content herself with a pair of horses to her carriage; and Caroline must give up her riding-horse, and her own groom—she can ride that bay filly of mine when she wants to go out, and Sanders can ride out with her when I don't want him to attend upon myself: and you, Master Harry, as you are so fond of retrenchments, let us see what you mean to do."

"I sent my horses to Tattersall's this morning," said Henry, "and I have paid off Charles. I shall want nothing, sir, absolutely nothing. Father —excuse me for saying so—I could accept of nothing from you until this money was repaid."

"Mighty fine, Mr. Philosopher! You mean to starve, then?"

"I mean to sit at your table, sir, as long as you and Lizzy will allow me a chair there," said Henry.

"Very well; so be it. Then, as for Craigie, they may talk, but I know him; he'll not be coming home yet awhile, depend upon it—something may turn up between this and then. In the mean time, let us do all that a reasonable being can require,—sell the two properties, and pay him what we can."

Henry sank back upon the chair; his eyes were bent upon the floor,—a few moments he paused and reflected,—a few moments he hesitated,—then he lifted up his eyes again and said seriously,

"I should be unworthy to be called your son, if I did not, however painful, remonstrate, where remonstrance is my first and strongest duty.

Forgive me, sir: this conversation must not end so; something more must be done on your part to avert dishonour and ruin."

"My part! why, am I not ready to make every sacrifice?"

"They must be *made*, sir, not talked of," said Henry. "This house must be sold—this establishment must be altogether broken up. It is plain now the deceptive and exorbitant dividends drawn from that confounded mining bubble are at an end; that with an income such as now remains to you, it would be perfectly preposterous to attempt to live in the style we have been living in. Take courage, my dear father,—cut away boldly; cut deep enough. What are shilly shally retrenchments in a case like this? Sell this house, sell the one at Roehampton; keep your Devonshire estate; let us go down there,—let us have done at once with parade and deception. A couple of thousand a-year, which I trust may yet remain to you, will command all that is necessary for happiness."

"I tell you I can't, and I won't, then," cried Mr. Wilmington, rising angrily, to put an end to

a conference which was getting too hard for him. "I tell you, I'd rather be dead at once than live like a country parson on a paltry two thousand a-year, in a confounded country place, where there was not a soul to speak to, nor one rational thing on earth to do. You're talking nonsense. It's all very fine for you; but I'm master still in my own house, thank Heaven, and not to be schooled by my own son. Do you think I am no judge of what's necessary to be done?—As good a one, at least, as a poor pitiful fellow who knows nothing of life or its demands, and never will know anything of it while he breathes—no, nor of the indispensable requirements of a gentleman and a man of spirit. Never you heed, Master Henry, I'll take care of myself, thank you; and pay old Craigie too,—make yourself sure of that. And here comes the newspaper; so let's have done quarrelling for one while."

Henry rose from his chair, walked to the window, and stood there lost in perplexed and melancholy thought,—that sort of despondency seizing upon his spirits—always too tender for the task in life appointed him—which besets the stoutest

hearts, when, suddenly disappointed in the expectations they had founded upon the character of another, they find themselves launched upon a sea of troubles, without polar star or compass to guide them.

Two or three times he turned his head, and looked wistfully at his father; but his father, holding the newspaper extended before his face, his knees negligently crossed, was lolling in his chair, apparently as much at ease, as if there were neither debt nor difficulty in the world. This way of getting through difficulties by resolutely shutting his eyes upon them, had stood him in such good stead through the course of his fortunate life, that it was become a fatal and inveterate habit, which the struggle with real difficulty had never tended to correct. Mr. Wilmington had, till now, always found the means, though at a heavy future cost, of disengaging himself from present embarrassment, without personal sacrifice. He could not be persuaded but that it might be done now.

We are none of us, perhaps, sufficiently grateful for the discipline of circumstance; for the imme-

diate punishment, in the shape of disappointment or difficulty, which waits upon our weaknesses and errors. Fatal security! into which the favourites of fortune too often fall. Fatal obstinacy in error, which results from unpunished wrong! "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Life furnishes a solemn commentary for the text, which ought to make the prosperous tremble, and awe them into circumspection.

Mr. Wilmington was roused for a moment from his newspaper, by the noise of the door shutting after Henry, as he left the room. He looked up, changed his left knee to his right, and went on with his reading.

Henry went up stairs. He knocked at Caroline's dressing-room door.

"Are you there, my Caroline?"

"Yes," answered Caroline, rising and opening the door. She started at his pale countenance,—"What is the matter, dearest Henry?"

"I am come to gather courage—to take breath for a moment with you, my sister, before I proceed in that which must be done. You know"—

sitting down and gasping rather than breathing,—"that the Melwyn mining speculation has failed, and we are—or we ought to be—ruined."

"And what does my father intend to do?"

"I don't know . . . . Caroline, I hope he will do justice; but let me, at all events, do my duty. I must break with Flavia."

"With Flavia, my brother!"

"Whatever my father may at this moment decide upon, one thing is plain,—he is eventually a ruined man. My dear, I speak without disguise to you. He wants courage, I see, to break through old habits—to retrench expenses, before it is too late, which it is now impossible he should be able to afford. A few months more or less, what matters it? But I will not betray her generous confidence. Flavia shall not enter a ruined family—shall not be the dupe of her own generous heart. I am going to her this evening; I would rather be the first to tell her. My Caroline, my only friend, say,—God speed you, and give you courage!"

Caroline was for a moment overcome; then she took her brother's hand and pressed it.

"You do right, Henry; God speed you, indeed; Come back to me when all is over."

She came in. She was in a simple white evening dress; her fair hair in a sort of sweet careless disorder of long ringlets hanging round her face and neck, and shading her soft blue eyes; a blue sash round her tiny waist; a blue ribbon round her throat. She came in smiling. An angel vision of loveliness to his soul she appeared.

"Well, my dear Henry, what did you want to say to me? I have laid down my hand at piquet to attend your summons, sir.—Very dutiful, am I not? But what's the matter, Henry? Dear Henry, how dreadfully pale—how undone you look!"

He did not speak: he took her hand and perused, as poor Ophelia, her face, rather than gazed upon it.

"Well, well, what is it, Henry?"

"You are, indeed, the sweetest, sweetest angel!"

"What is the matter?" earnestly. There was that in the deep, vehement tone with which he spoke those few words, which went to her heart. "What is the matter, Henry?"

"You are the most adorable being that ever shone upon the idolatrous fancy of man, or ever broke his heart."

"Henry! Henry!" He had never in his life spoken to her in such a passionate manner before, for he was no vain flatterer, even in his tenderest moments.

"Did you send for me here," she said, looking surprised, "only to talk this nonsense? I had better go to my cards again."

"Forgive me, Flavia! or I shall die at your feet."

"I willingly forgive you, Henry; but yet I wonder you would offend and hurt me," she began.

But he turned from her rebuke, covered his face with his hands, took one or two hasty passionate strides up and down the room, and then

his eyes staring out, his hair dashed from his face, with the aspect of one almost distracted rather than overwhelmed by suffering; he came up to her and said,

"Forgive me, Flavia!—nay, forgive me—you must—you must. It is the last, last time, my idol!—my love!—my life!—my sweetest, sweetest, sweetest, treasure!—I must part with you."

And as if his heart had broken in saying it, he sank upon a chair, covered his face with his hands, and tears in floods streamed over his fingers.

"Good Heavens! Henry, what is all this about? Part—part! what are you thinking of?"

He conquered his emotion: he felt ashamed of his weakness.

"I am a poor fellow, Flavia, quite unworthy of you in all ways. My love, I am a poor, poor creature—a fellow quite unworthy of you. You will do better—far better, I hope. My Flavia," taking her hand, as she stood by him where he sat, "My love, oh! yet one moment. Angel! let me look one moment longer. My love, honour, duty, reason, justice, alike demand it. I must give you up, my life,—my father is ruined!"

"I don't understand you," said she; and the hand he held became very cold.

"My love, those mines, of which I have often spoken to you with anxiety. The agents have betrayed his confidence; the bubble, as I feared, has burst, and we are beggars."

She trembled, shivered, became very pale, withdrew her hand, took a chair, and sat down.

"Is there no hope?—These matters may be set right," said she.

"None," he replied—chilled, and it must be owned, somewhat disappointed by the way in which she received his announcement.

"Your father must be ruined, and Caroline, and all of you?"

"All of us, Flavia," said he, mournfully; "but luckily, there is yet time, my love, to rescue you."

"And can nothing be done to save your father? Ruin, Henry, is a fearful, fearful thing. Do not give it up in this manner. Surely a man is not to suffer himself and his affairs to be utterly upset by a sudden misfortune. In wrecks of this sort —so immense as this—there must be waifs and

strays. There must be fragments of a fortune like your father's, sufficient to content a moderate man. Henry, tell me there is something left."

"I do not mean that there is absolutely nothing—that we are going actually to starve; but there is not a hope of it now ever being in my power to offer you, Flavia, what your friends ought to require, and what you so well deserve. I must give up that hope once so sweet to me. May you bless a more fortunate man."

"You don't think, Henry, I am going to give up my engagement with you?"

"Indeed, my life, it must be thought of no more."

"My dear Henry! what on earth have your father's affairs and our engagement to do with each other? Was it that," rising and taking his hand and kissing it; "was it that, dear, dear Henry, which made you so unhappy? Never think it, my love. My mother, my friends . . . . Ah! yes, I see it; but they may tear me with wild horses, they shall never tear me from thee!" And she kissed his hand again. Sweet womanly token of love and reverence.

He looked up at her as she stood holding his hand, and the sweetest emotions of admiration, and fondness, succeeded to the bitter, racking, irritating feelings of the moment before.

"Nay, my sweet Flavia, you must not say so;" and the tears stood again in his eyes. "We must part; but God in Heaven bless you, my darling, for the balm your words have poured upon my heart. There is a sweetness even in this hour, my soul's idol. All you do is so sweet,—even parting is sweetened."

"Oh! don't talk of it—don't think of it. I am your wife—your wife in the eye of Heaven—your wife in the secret recesses of my own heart. I could as soon rend my heart in twain, as sever it from you, Henry."

"But your mother, my love—your friends—my duty—my honour."

"My mother must not, cannot, ought not, to separate man and wife," said she, solemnly; "whom God has joined, as he has joined us, man cannot and must not sunder. Your honour, it is pledged to me, Henry. I do not, I never will release it. I will wait with patience, I will do

all that propriety or your high feelings require. You shall have your own time, do in all else as you will, but I never, never, will release you."

The party Flavia had left up stairs consisted only of the Duchess, now a great invalid, and Flavia's mother, the Lady Margaret ——. Flavia's mother was a fine tall woman; had been extremely handsome, and had still great remains of her former handsomeness—for beauty we will not call it —we will not apply that divine word to anything so dependant upon form and colour, as was the appearance of Lady Margaret ——; regular, well-proportioned features; finely formed eyes; a figure, which would have been elegant, but for a certain formality which characterized it; a dress in the best taste, but starched; a composed, cold manner,—such was the mother of the sweet, animated, unsophisticated Flavia.

The Duchess and her little friend had, as she had said, been playing at piquet; and Flavia had

laid down her cards, on being requested to speak for one moment with a person on business. Her mother had thereupon closed the last new novel, and in an indolent, lounging manner, had taken up her daughter's hand.

There was a knock at the house door, a little bustle in the hall, and Lord George was ushered into the drawing-room.

"George—dear George!" cried the Duchess.

"Lord George!" exclaimed the mother, rising and offering her hand.

He took the offered hand cordially; then drawing a chair to the fire, sat down by the two ladies.

"Where is Flavia?"

"She will be here in a moment," said the mother.

Lord George looked round the room, then took Lady Margaret's hand, and in a cautious, whispering sort of voice, began,—

"My dear madam, I am sorry to be the bearer of ill-news; but you ought to be informed without delay. . . . . Mr. Wilmington is ruined."

"And his son?"

"Must be a beggar with his father. There is no settled property—nothing the young man can call his own. He may go to Australia, if he likes it, with his father: it is the only thing he can do."

"And Flavia?"

"Oh!" said Lord George, in a tone of pique, "no doubt she will be but too happy to be allowed to accompany them."

"But that she never, never shall do," said the mother. "I always expected something would turn out wrong. This absurd, provoking whim of hers!—this low, preposterous attachment!—a mere mercantile bubble all their pretended wealth!—so unworthy ——"

"It is a pity, no doubt," sighed the Duchess; "but if their affairs be really in the state Lord George represents, Flavia is reasonable—she will give up an engagement productive only of distress to us all."

"Yes," said Lord George, "if she were not what she is; but, rely upon it, she will never break her faith; and young Wilmington is not fool enough to set her at liberty."

"He must—he shall ——" began the mother, warmly, when the door again opened and Flavia appeared.

She started on seeing Lord George, and was hastily retreating.

"Come in, my dear," said the Duchess.

"Come in, child," said the mother; "it is only Lord George."

Flavia hesitated.

"Nay," said Lord George; "if you cannot sit five minutes in the same room with me, I am gone."

"For shame!" cried the irritable mother; "come in, and don't be such a simpleton. Who wanted to speak to you?"

Flavia coloured.

"A matter of business, mother."

"Pooh! Business which I am not to know a syllable of, no doubt."

"All—everything, but not just now."

"I see, I am in the way," said Lord George; "I had better be off."

"No," said the Duchess; "stay a little. Flavia, my dear," holding out her hand, and looking

kindly and compassionately upon her, "come and sit down by me."

She obeyed. The Duchess continued to hold her small white hand between her two withered palms, pressing it from time to time most tenderly and kindly. Her aged heart yearned fondly to this pretty young creature,—almost the last thing left on earth that she could love.

Old age, when benevolent, is the best, the kindest, the most indulgent thing in the world. To the long experience of years—to the exhausted imagination—the stifled feelings—the calm tranquillity of this still evening of life—the long, long experience of its woes and its storms—these tender creatures, exposed to all the buffets of passion and fortune, afford the saddest and most affecting spectacle. The Duchess, who had long lost the faculty of tears herself, was melted to the heart by the quivering lips and dewy eye of her young favourite.

Lord George, too, saw something had moved her; and his heart beat rapidly as he looked at her, longing for an opportunity of communicating his intelligence, hoping, fearing, desiring what the

consequence of this new turn of affairs might be. Would it release her? Had he yet a chance of obtaining the creature he so doted upon?

He felt that he ought to go, and leave to the ladies the task of communicating his intelligence; but he was vehement and self-willed, and had far more passion than delicacy. He chose to stay, rude and unfeeling as it was to pry into her sensations at such a moment; and his impatience would not suffer him long to wait.

"Will you tell her?" he said, in a low voice, to the mother.

The mother had some little feeling, and said,—

"Not now."

"If you won't, I will, then," said Lord George. It must be remembered they were cousins; such familiarity, such a rude breaking in upon the family confidence, would have been absolutely impossible under other circumstances.

"Better put it off till to-morrow," whispered Lady Margaret.

"I cannot live in the miserable uncertainty I am in," returned he. "I beseech you, tell her; let us hear what she will say."

"There is bad news abroad, Flavia," began the mother.

Flavia raised her eyes and looked at her.

"Lord George brings us very unpleasant rumours."

Her daughter still was silent, fixing her eyes gravely upon her face.

"The Wilmingtons ——"

"Are ruined," interrupted Lord George, abruptly, "as everybody thought they would be, ages ago. The fine fellow has had too much to do with that mining speculation. The bubble has burst; the others are off to America, and the dandy merchant will be in the King's Bench, it is said, shortly."

"I know it," said Flavia; "but it is not quite so bad as you say."

"You know it!" cried the mother. "How could you have heard it? and why on earth did you keep it to yourself?"

"I have but just heard it."

"And who the deuce could have told you?" cried Lord George.

"Henry Wilmington himself."

There was a pause.

"My dear, dear child," said the Duchess, again pressing her hand; "this is very painful news, I fear, for you."

"Of course it is, my dear madam. I am very, very sorry for it."

"Mighty cool," thought Lord George to himself. His spirits rose immediately: he got up, placed himself on the sofa beside her,—looked at her with his sweetest and tenderest expression of countenance.

"Sweet Flavia, you bear it like an angel," said he; "and perhaps, after all——"

"No," said Flavia, "I don't bear it well at all. I have been crying about it, and could cry my heart out, if that would do any good."

"But it will do no good on earth," said he; "and you are a darling little philosopher in this as in other cases. And oh," whispering, "could you but make a philosopher of me!"

She moved a little nearer the Duchess, looked seriously at him, and said,

"Sir!"

"My dear," said her mother, surprised in her

turn, and not a little delighted at the composure of her daughter's manner; "you really do bear this like an angel. Then it was Mr. Henry Wilmington that begged to speak to you, I suppose; and——"

"And to tell all, and take his leave for ever, as a man of honour ought," cried Lord George, his eyes sparkling.

"Yes," said Flavia.

"My darling child," said the Duchess, kissing her fondly; "how good you are."

"Good, my dear madam?"

"You are quite an angel, Flavia," responded the mother. "I really do not know you. And so, all is happily over, thank heaven, and you are my child once more."

And she gave one of those sighs that possess such an unutterable expression of grief.

Lord George said nothing, but "Thank God," sighed, and endeavoured to take her hand. He bent his head downwards, as if to kiss it. There was real feeling in his behaviour now, and it touched her a little.

So she turned her eyes gravely to him, and said,

"You are under some mistake, Lord George."

"Have you not told us he came to release you?" asked the mother, rather peevishly. "What mistake can there be?"

"Yes," said Flavia, "he came to tell me the worst, and to release me from my engagement.... But you do not think," turning her eyes upon the Duchess, "I hope you do not think so ill of me, madam——"

"My dear, under the circumstances——" her grandmother began.

"Under the circumstances, no woman in her senses——" interrupted the mother.

"Under the circumstances such romantic absurdity would be impossible," broke in Lord George.

"Mother, I withstood your wishes in this matter. Perhaps I did wrong. But I must, indeed, have done wrong if I had resisted your wish upon light and childish grounds. Nothing has happened in the least to shake my confidence in Henry Wilmington's virtue and integrity. He

has acted as he always acts,—nobly, justly, disinterestedly.—My dear madam," turning to the Duchess again, "there is no foolish imprudence in this. I have enough for both. I shall adhere to my engagement."

The Duchess pressed her hand in silence.

Lord George retreated a little distance from her, and fell back on the sofa, his eyes still fixed upon her, his face filled with an expression of the bitterest disappointment.

But the mother burst out—

"What inconceivable folly, nonsense, and obstinacy! Do you really imagine—can you be so stupidly perverse—as to believe that I will suffer or hear of your continuing a rash engagement with a beggarly citizen; because, forsooth, you are a splendid heiress, and there is enough for *both?* I say I have been fooled with this romantic stuff, unworthy of a boarding-school miss just in her teens, till I am sick. A homely, vulgar, ugly, merchant's clerk, not worth a sou,—neither manner, talents, personal advantages, birth, or connexion; not even his dirty bank-bills his own. And, forsooth, because you have wealth enough for

both. Preposterous nonsense! Because you are high bred, high born, rich, pleasing, you are to fling yourself at his head in this manner. I am ashamed of you, Flavia!"

Flavia coloured high, and looked imploringly at the Duchess. Her eyes said:

"Do you, too, misconstrue me? Do you, too, see nothing in virtue and goodness, that may weigh against beauty, rank, and wealth?"

"My dear child," said this excellent woman, "I do not wonder that your mother is worried about this affair. You should reflect well, Flavia."

"Reflect! No, she will never reflect;—headstrong, fanciful, self-willed girl. Well! get along; go and be married to your precious bargain. Choose between him and me. I have done with you."

Flavia's colour faded and rose;—she was pale, she was crimson; she seemed suffocating with words that before Lord George she did not like to utter. She looked once or twice at him, but he would not go; he kept his place, his eyes fixed upon her. He was a strange creature; his curio-

sity to hear what she would say just at present mastered his other feelings.

Her mother paused a little while, and seemed waiting for an answer; but Flavia continued silent. Nothing irritates and at once confounds an angry person like silence.

"Well, will you not condescend to speak to me? have you nothing to say?" at last she broke forth.

"Nothing, mother."

"Do you mean me to understand that this romantic business is to come to an end or not?" imperiously.

"How can you, mamma," at last she began to warm in her turn; "how can you, mamma, suppose I could be guilty of such a mean, contemptible, cruel action, as to forsake a man to whom I was betrothed before God and man, because he has lost his money? I thought"—with some indignation still in her tone—"I thought you at least, madam," turning to the Duchess, "had known me better."

"I beg your pardon, indeed, my love," was all the Duchess could articulate.

But Lord George, who had remained motionless, leaning back on the sofa, regarding her in gloomy silence, now started up—a beautiful radiance of love and admiration beamed upon his countenance.

"You are right, dear, sweet, blessed creature," he cried, passionately catching both her hands, and pressing them to his lips and to his heart. "I will never, never, if I live a thousand years, plague you with a word or a look again. I vow to be your slave, your friend, your brother, as long as my heart shall throb within my breast. Farewell, my Flavia! Let me be your brother, your husband's friend; let me save you, watch for you, labour for you, pray for you,—it is all I will ever ask," and pressing her hands once more passionately to his heart, he let them fall and left the room.

CHAPTER XI.

With such amazement as weak mothers use,
And frantic gesture, he receives the news.

WALLER.

THERE are periods in life when events succeed each other with almost breathless rapidity, and this was the case now.

The arrangements of Mr. Wilmington's affairs, or rather such retrenchments as his son could persuade him to adopt, were gradually carried into effect. The house at Rochampton which he would not sell, he was prevailed upon to let, but the family remained still in Belgrave-square, not without sundry murmurings upon the part of

Lizzy, who now discovered that it was impossible to exist without fresh air. Expenses still continued upon a large scale, and were maintained in the old way, by the sale, one after the other, of various odds and ends which still remained, and the proceeds of which melted away as fast as they were obtained. The first thing which seemed really to awaken Mr. Wilmington from this vain dream, and excite a serious feeling of uneasiness, was the report which gradually became more and more prevalent in the City, that Craiglethorpe of Calcutta was realizing his large property, and was certainly coming home.

It was long before he could be brought to believe it; he could not, he would not believe it. Was there the slightest probability that such a measure should be in agitation and he never informed of it? Yet in spite of all his declarations, he could not help looking upon this dreaded return, which he knew sooner or later must inevitably take place, something with that altered eye with which a man regards death, from the crowded scenes of pleasure and business, or from a sick bed.

This increase of anxiety, however, led him to take one other step in the way of retrenchment. He suffered himself to be prevailed upon by Henry to let the splendid house in Belgrave square, to adjourn to one in Upper Seymour-street; and, as the expectation of Mr. Craiglethorpe's return strengthened, as reports day by day became more frequent, Henry was able to persuade him into various other little plans of economy, to which he had till now found it vain to call his attention.

So passed that winter, and again the spring drew on, and the cold March winds whistled along the streets, and the rains fell heavily, and all was cheerless without, and there was little comfort within.

Mrs. Wilmington, no longer kept in good humour by adulation and display, was full of nothing but peevish lamentations over her unfortunate fate. Such is it to acquire habits of expensive luxury,—to enlarge the amount of things necessary; for how soon do luxuries cease to be sources of pleasure, and become mere necessaries, the possession of which gives no enjoy-

ment, but the privation of which is a very positive pain.

How soon—sooner than they are themselves aware,—do even the wise, unless they keep a heedful eye upon themselves, become entangled in the web of expensive habits?—With fools to be so is a matter of course.

Lizzy, who before she married Mr. Wilmington would have thought a husband and a house in Upper Seymour-street a prize indeed, accustomed to Belgravia, mourned her hard lot unceasingly. She really felt it as a privation;—there was no affectation in that;—so did Mr. Wilmington,—or would have done, had not his mind been occupied with a harassing sense of anxiety and terror at the idea of his friend's return. Even Caroline confessed to herself how easily she had accustomed herself to the expensive habits of her family; and it was some time before she could quite forget her roomy and lofty dressing-room and bed-chamber, which was now exchanged for a small apartment upon the upper floor. She smiled at her own weakness, and moralized much as I have done above; and she soon reconciled herself to the

necessary privations; but she found it difficult to reconcile herself to Lizzy's worrying complaints and pettish humours.—It was miserable work.

Henry was little at home. He was engaged the whole day in business connected with this unfortunate mining affair. Indefatigable in his endeavours to save something from the wreck for Mr. Craiglethorpe; indefatigable in his endeavours to restrain his father, wasteful even in what he thought economy. Flavia he was separated from; her mother had carried her down to Wales, and forbade her to receive his visits. However, the next year she would be of age, and able to assert her right of choice; and in the meantime they corresponded, and her letters sweetened many a heavy hour.

Henry entirely believed in the report of Mr. Craiglethorpe's speedy return, but this added nothing to *his* anxiety. It was not the dread of facing him, but the dread of wronging him that preyed upon his mind.

He had found it impossible to persuade his father to write a correct statement of what had occurred to his friend. Wilmington always put

it off upon the plea that till the mining business was wound up, it would be impossible to tell how much money might be rescued from the wreck, or for how much Mr. Craiglethorpe would have to come upon his (Wilmington's) private fortune, which he persisted in believing to be fully equal to any probable demand. But both Henry and he knew better; and whilst the one trembled in secret at the idea of being called to account, the other felt relieved by the idea that the worst would soon be known. Nay, he was actually impatient for Mr. Craiglethorpe to arrive, in order that he might seize for himself such portions of the wreck of Mr. Wilmington's fortune, as Henry found himself powerless to secure for him.

Nothing of all this had he communicated to Selwyn; for the first time there had been a reserve to his friend. It is true, Selwyn was aware that the mining speculation had failed, and that there would be a large sum due to his uncle, which it would a good deal embarrass Mr. Wilmington to pay, and he had made the most liberal offers of assistance, but these Henry had peremptorily rejected. He felt it would be but to increase

the injury already inflicted, to suffer any use to be made of Selwyn's money.

The fear that these offers should be made to Mr. Wilmington, that his father should become acquainted with, and accept them, now sealed Henry's lips. Hour after hour he passed with his friend, his spirits worried with vexation, harass, and anxiety; but he persevered in his resolution, and the consolation of confidence was forbidden him.

The winter brought with it additional sources of distress, in the rapidly increasing decline of Selwyn. He became always much worse towards the beginning of February, and now it was March, and he appeared sinking fast into the grave.

Sickness seems to extinguish the love of life, and the victim of consumption drinking death, as it were, by slow degrees, becomes insensibly reconciled to the bitter draught. One by one, the prospects of youth and happiness had melted away; the visions of this world had faded before his closing eyes, and better and fairer began to succeed.

The world to come began to assume the form of the actual and the real; the present world to float around him like an uncertain dream.

Much they talked of death; much they speculated upon that unseen and infinite to which the one was rapidly verging, whilst the other remained to struggle on with the painful obstructions of this material life. The one about to depart was calm, serene, and peaceful. Undying hope, awestruck but tender aspirations after a greater good, a wider wisdom, a better life, spent in more intimate communion with the One great, the One benevolent, the One wise, opened before him; but the other was agitated, and full of sorrow.

He who was first to tread the dark path from which human nature shrinks back with horror, consoled and strengthened him who was to remain. The attachment which Henry felt for his friend assumed almost a character of enthusiastic admiration during these last few weeks.

At last the news so much dreaded by the father was confirmed. The intelligence arrived overland, that Mr. Craiglethorpe had realised his property, and had actually sailed in the Sumatra

upon the 21st of December; he might be expected to arrive in England about June.

These were days before the steamers had rendered the passage by the Red Sea an ordinary one. At this period, no one, except a special messenger now and then, or, still more seldom, an adventurous traveller, made the transit over-land, as it is called. Mr. Craiglethorpe, of course, come round by the Cape, about a six months' business, in a sailing-vessel.

When the fact could no longer be disputed, Mr. Wilmington did at last begin to feel all and more of the racking and irritating anxiety which he had been so often the cause of inflicting upon others. As there had been no bounds to his restless defiance of consequences; no limits to his almost audacious confidence in his own good luck, and disregard of the future; as no description can do justice to the insane determination with which he resisted the evidence before him, and resolutely shut his eyes against what was certain to come; so there seemed no limits, no description can do justice, to the miserable, degrading terrors with which he was seized,

when first he was forced to realise to himself that the hour for calling him to account was actually approaching, and that the man would shortly appear whom he had affected to laugh at and trifle with, at a distance, but whom he dreaded beyond measure to meet.

He could no longer delude himself with the excuses he had made to Harry, and with which he had silenced certain misgivings of his own heart: that Mr. Craiglethorpe had had due warning; that the money had been invested at his own request, and so on. Now he felt, as strongly as Harry had ever done, that this confidence was granted upon his own representations, and his representations alone; and he knew far better than Harry did,—far more than Harry, happily for himself, had even suspected—how exaggerated, how unwarrantable, how intentionally false, those representations had been. True, he had been most sanguine as to the success of the undertaking; but how came he not to adhere to truth in his account of it to the man who had trusted him? And now that man was coming home. He knew him well; he knew that he had the eye of a

lynx where interest was concerned; that it would be vain to attempt to throw dust in his eyes; that he would detect every subterfuge, unmask every misrepresentation, and that he would be enraged beyond measure at the loss of his money. Craiglethorpe, robbed of his money, would be as the lioness deprived of her whelps,—he would be without mercy.

Whether in the extravagance of his terror Mr. Wilmington did not now exaggerate these dispositions in his friend may be doubted; as far as Harry and Caroline could recollect of him, he did not seem altogether so hard and mercenary as their father seemed to think: but it was impossible, in the state in which they now saw him, to look forward without awe to the approaching meeting.

One good consequence, however, resulted from this agony of terror. Mr. Wilmington became as anxious to spare as he had been till now greedy to spend. He gave up even the house in Upper Seymour-street, and retired to a still smaller one. He sold his carriages and horses; he advertised his house at Roehampton, and the other in Bel-

grave-square, for sale. He was now in danger of sacrificing valuable property in his nervous impatience to realise. These hasty measures impaired his credit; tradesmen again became importunate; money was with difficulty obtained; and the unhappy man was kept in a perfect fever of agitation, enduring the torture of the Danaides in the contemplation of that banker's book, into which he was continually pouring something or other, vainly hoping to have a good sum ready against Mr. Craiglethorpe's arrival; but which the imperious demands of to-day were as rapidly emptying.

The end of March came; it was the 26th.

April, May, June. Twelve or fourteen weeks at most, and the Sumatra must be in the river. She was a splendid vessel, celebrated for her fast sailing. Mr. Craiglethorpe, it was said, had all his fortune on board with him, except what he had transmitted to Mr. Wilmington.

But what mattered that, or how large his possessions might be? Men are not the more indifferent to the loss of one hundred thousand pounds, because they have in their coffers thrice

the sum. Wilmington knew the world well enough to be assured of that. The description of Craiglethorpe's wealth only swelled to his imagination the weight of that power which was steadily advancing to crush him.

This 26th of March was a wretched, wretched day. It opened with a black, bleak, miserable morning, upon a sufficiently uncomfortable company, now assembled at breakfast at Mr. Wilmington's.

The small room was very cold, in spite of the fire, which, to tell truth, was behaving as fires will do upon these black, bleak days: it would not blaze,—it looked as cold and comfortless as the sky. Lizzy, in a horrible ill-humour and very slovenly half-dressing-gown sort of wrap, was pouring out the tea. Caroline was cutting bread and butter for her father, who, sitting by the fire in a sulky disconsolate sort of mood, made no reply to his wife's fretful—

"Mr. Wilmington, breakfast is ready. Mr. Wilmington, I declare you keep all the fire from one. Caroline, I really think you might take your turn in making tea, sometimes. I declare

I'm frozen to death. Henry. Oh, he's not here! Will nobody stir that fire? Henry.—Oh! here you come,—always late. I declare it's too bad to be kept here waiting by everybody. Caroline, I do think you ought to make breakfast, sometimes."

"I will do it readily at any time, Lizzy. But you never seemed to like that I should. Shall I pour out Henry's tea now, whilst you go to the fire?"

"It's no use going to such a fire as that. Mr. Wilmington—Henry—*will* you give it a stir?"

Mr. Wilmington, upon this, in an abrupt manner, gave the fire a poke, which drove all the black coals into the expiring red; and, turning his pale, anxious, care-worn face to Henry, said,—

"What time do you start?"

"The first coach goes at eleven, the second at two. I think I had better take the first; no time should be lost."

"By all means take the first. If anything is yet to be done, for the love of heaven don't let it slip, Harry."

"You may be sure I will do my best, sir," answered the son, cheerfully. "You really don't look well, father," said he, coming up to him with his usual kindness; "I am afraid you have had a bad night."

Mr. Wilmington shook his head.

"Middling," he said; "but Harry—" and drawing his son towards him he whispered in his ear.

"Never fear, sir, never fear," was the cheering reply; "don't be discouraged: now we have once heartily put our shoulders to the wheel, we shall drag the carriage through, never fear, yet. It will be something," looking cheerfully round the little apartment, "to have you found living here."

Mr. Wilmington sighed. He could not take that comfort in these mortifying privations, which his children did. He looked rueful, and began again to stir the fire.

"Will you never have done with that horrid noise?" cried Lizzy; "besides, do come to breakfast. See, there are a heap of letters for you both; and here—here's the newspaper just come in."

"That fellow never will learn to dry it," said Mr. Wilmington, lazily unfolding it, and spreading it before the now somewhat recovering fire.

He seemed obstinate about his breakfast, as if on purpose to provoke his wife. He began to read the newspaper, while she fretted almost aloud like a child.

He never minded her in the least; he seemed to take a pleasure in being tiresome; he read on, yet he read lazily, as if it was not for the pleasure of reading, but of being provoking, that he read. The fire began to blaze,—that was one thing, and its warmth was comfortable to his dull spirits. Henry went on with his breakfast; Caroline and he talked in a low voice together. Something concerning these mines demanded his immediate presence in Cornwall—he was about to start that morning. They were consulting how she was to send him his letters, and about his impatience not to be long away from Selwyn.

The fire blazed, Mrs. Wilmington pouted; Mr. Wilmington turned the paper idly about..... Suddenly his eye caught something—a paragraph. He stooped down, reading it as if he would devour

it; he bent it to the fire as if he would see it by that light; then he gathered the paper up and crushed it into his pocket, and starting up made as if he would run out of the room; he then sat down again and panted as if for breath; then he pulled out the paper again—again bent down to the fire, and read or rather devoured the passage.

"What in the world is the matter now?" said Lizzy, who had been watching him.

At this his two children looked up.

He was pale with emotion; but it was not the emotion of grief—every feature was working with agitation. Again he crumpled up the paper into his pocket, and looked quite bewildered, almost as if he was beside himself—it certainly was not sorrow—it hardly seemed with joy—what was it?

"My dear father," said Caroline.

"For goodness sake, Mr. Wilmington, what can be the reason of these unaccountable ways; are you going crazy?" exclaimed his wife.

"My dear sir, what *is* the matter?" asked Harry, coming up to him anxiously, as soon as he was aware of the state he was in; "what can have happened?"

"Harry—Harry—my boy—my boy—read it yourself, read it yourself," was all he could articulate, taking the newspaper out of his pocket again, and putting it into his hand.

Henry unfolded the paper and searched about, but saw nothing.

"I find nothing, sir;—where is it? what is it?" he said.

"Give it me;" he was panting violently—his hand shook as he took the paper again—he found the paragraph with difficulty, and his shaking finger pointed it out to his son.

Henry read.

"It is with regret that we have to announce that advices have been last evening received at the India House announcing that, that noble East Indiaman, the Sumatra, which sailed from Calcutta the 4th of September last, was struck by lightning and perished in a terrific storm off the north-east point of Madagascar, lat. 15°, long. 45°, on the 10th of October last. Advices have been received from the Cape which leave no doubt of the deplorable catastrophe. We lament to say that every soul on board perished, except the

mate and two seamen, who escaped by a miracle. The particulars in our next. Names of passengers on board:

"Henry Wilson, Esq., Mrs. Wilson, and four children.

"Mrs. James Murray and child.

"Mr. Fisher and son, and servant.

"Mr. Craiglethorpe, of Calcutta, and two servants," &c. &c.

"Good God!" was all that Harry could say. He was excessively shocked. He was the more shocked from the horrid feeling of relief which the disastrous intelligence forced even upon him, and which was but too visible upon his father's agitated countenance. Yes it was joy, terrible joy,—joy inexpressible, which his son could not help reading there.

Harry handed the paper to Caroline; Lizzy got up in a hurry, and read over her shoulder.

"Well, that is strange," said she. All the rest were silent. Harry at last took up the paper.

"It is perhaps, after all, only a newspaper report."

"Ha!" said Wilmington; "who's hand is that?"

"Fergusson's," naming an India Director. He broke the seal.

Leadenhall-street.

"Dear Wilmington,

"It is with extreme regret, that I have to inform you of the awful disaster which has befallen one of our finest vessels, the 'Sumatra,' off the north-east coast of Madagascar;—struck by lightning in a thunder-storm, on the 10th of October last;—gone to the bottom, and, with the exception of three, every soul on board perished. Of course you were aware that poor Craiglethorpe was on board. I condole with you upon the loss of so valuable a friend. Poor fellow! singular to the last; the most part, if not all, of his immense wealth, it is said in bullion, on board,—chose to bring it home that way,—all gone to the bottom. It is a dreadful business,—nothing but desolation around us here,—everybody coming to inquire for a friend or relation. Poor Wilson, and that sweet wife of his, and his three children, coming home to be happy,—and Fisher, and

that prepossessing fellow, his son. It is a frightful business. The loss in property incalculable. —In haste.

Your's faithfully.

T. Fergusson.

"P.S.—Poor Craiglethorpe had a nephew, I think; I do not know him, nor do any of us, but have heard he is in a bad state of health. I think I have heard you speak of him as your friend; will you take means that he should have this grievous news broken to him, before he reads it in the newspapers. It will be in the morning papers of to-morrow."

"How comes it!—This letter ought to have been delivered last night, but I hope it is not too late. I will hasten to Selwyn," cried Henry. —"My dear father, I cannot lose a moment;—there are a few other directions to take,—a matter or two to talk over before I leave town, which I shall not do now, till the last coach at two. Call in Portugal-street, will you, and let me speak a few words to you; don't be later than one, sir, if you please. Caroline, let William take my

things to the coach, for that which starts by two. Good bye, I shall not see you again for a few days, may be a week. Farewell, Lizzy," and he was off, clapping his hat upon his head, and carrying his great coat upon his arm.

CHAPTER XII.

There is a Reaper, whose name is Death,
And with his sickle keen,
He reaps the bearded grain at a breath,
And the flowers that grow between.

LONGFELLOW.

HE hastened to Portugal-street, in which quiet street Selwyn had lately taken up his residence. He lived in a large, roomy, but somewhat gloomy house, for that street is singularly secluded and quiet for so animated a part of the town; but this was what he loved.

Henry ran rather than walked, in his anxiety to spare his friend the shock of first seeing his uncle's death in the newspaper; and as Charles, Selwyn's old man-servant, opened

the door, in answer to his hasty knock, he cried,

"Has your master had this morning's paper?"

"Oh dear, no sir," answered poor Charles, sadly; "here it lies upon the hall slab; I quite forgot it. Poor master has had an awful night; I was just about to run for you, sir, but he seems a little better now."

"Good heavens! you don't say so! What's the matter; how was it all. Has he been hearing any bad news?"

"No, sir. He went quite quiet to bed, and was merrier than I've seen him of late, sir; and laughed, and chatted as I put him to rights; and 'Charles,' says he, 'I would not, for much, that folks knew what a capital nurse you make me; as sure as you're alive, you'd be nicknamed the old woman.' 'Nicknamed or not, all one to me, so as I give you satisfaction, sir,' says I; but he went on joking so, that it did my heart good to hear him. And then, in the middle of the night, mixing with a dream as it were, tinkle, tinkle goes a bell; and at last louder and louder, till, half-awake, half asleep, I starts up, and it's master's

bell; I run to him, and, oh! but he was desperate ill! Mrs. Lomax was called, and was with him the best part of the night; and we sent for Mr. Greene,—but he would not let us send for Dr. Horris,—he said Mr. Greene could do all that could be done."

"How is he now? Can I see him? Be sure you don't let him see to-day's paper."

"He's quiet now, but very much exhausted; but he's not asleep. See him? He's always glad to see you, sir, be he how he may; the sight of you would be a cordial to him. Won't you walk up stairs?"

Henry went up, and entered his poor friend's room. He was in bed, looking wretchedly exhausted, but quite calm and composed; the medical man had not yet left him.

The two friends exchanged greetings in a subdued voice; Selwyn spoke with difficulty from extreme weakness,—Henry from suppressed emotion. He was dreadfully shocked at the change which had taken place. In spite of what Charles had related he could not help looking anxiously into Selwyn's face, to discover whether, by some accident or

other, the fatal news had not been revealed to him; but the composure of Selwyn's countenance assured him this was yet to be done.

That it must not be done at this moment, was but too evident; and Henry was confirmed in this opinion by a few words which he exchanged with the surgeon, whom he followed out of the room.

"This has been a terrible attack. How is he?"

The paroxysm had subsided, and with less alarming consequences than might have been anticipated. The surgeon told him no immediate danger was to be apprehended, and he would probably become much as he had been yesterday, provided always that he could be kept perfectly quiet; the slightest agitation might produce the most disastrous consequences. He entreated Mr. Wilmington not to converse with him, nor suffer him even to speak, more than was absolutely necessary.

Henry returned to the sick man's room considerably relieved. When the door closed, Selwyn drew the curtain of his bed a little back, and signed

to Henry to sit down upon the chair by his bedside.

He spoke very low as he said, "You are going into Cornwall to-day."

"I must; there is an appointment it is absolutely necessary that I should keep."

"To be sure, Harry, it is indispensable—I know it; but come back as soon as you can."

"I shall travel day and night. Unless something very unforeseen happens, I shall be back with you next Thursday."

"Thursday; that won't quite do. There is something I want done about poor Mrs. Seaton's business—you know what I mean. I put it all in train last night, and meant to send Charles early this morning. I feel too ill even to give him directions as to what he is to do; but you understand all about it. Do be so good, Harry, as to give him his orders before you start, and send him off to Blackwall immediately. I can't rest till the poor woman's business is done."

"Be easy, my dear fellow, it shall be done instantly. I will dispatch him at once; so do you turn round, and go to sleep."

The sick man, relieved from that harassing anxiety which oppresses us when something important ought to be done, and bodily weakness renders it impossible for us to effect it, did as his friend desired, and, turning round, composed himself to slumber.

Leaving him in this tranquil state, Henry stole gently out of the room, went down into the hall, summoned Charles, and carefully delivered his directions to him. Charles was already in possession of the necessary papers, which he said his master had sent him that morning to fetch out of a drawer in a bureau which stood in the dining-room. This drawer was now standing open, and some papers had fallen upon the floor; tossed out, as I believe, by Charles, as he looked for the packet he was directed to find, and which he, being hastily summoned by his master's bell, had forgotten in his hurry: the keys, too, were left hanging in the lock. This little disorder might have been observed by any one standing in the hall; but if Henry saw it, occupied as his mind then was, it escaped his attention. I believe, however, it left a vague

picture on his memory, which was recollected years afterwards.

Henry talked some time with Charles, and then let him out himself, at the hall-door. Hurried, heated, and agitated as he was, the fresh air, though so raw and cold as it was, felt pleasant. He stood a second or two upon the steps, and watched the old servant down the street; he was then turning to re-enter the house, when he saw his father approaching. Anxious that Selwyn should not be disturbed by his knocking, he waited in order to let his father in; which he did, closing the door very cautiously, to avoid noise. The two gentlemen remained in the hall a short time, talking over the business in hand; then, telling his father that Selwyn was very indifferent that morning, he described in a few words the symptoms, which to Mr. Wilmington, more experienced in such matters than himself, appeared extremely alarming. He forbore, however, to express his opinion upon the matter, lest his son should be tempted to delay his journey.

Henry then ran up to Selwyn's room, again asking his father to step into the dining-room,

and wait there till he came down again, saying he wished to say a few words more before he set out. He looked at his watch; it was half-past twelve. "I have only an hour to be with him," thought he.

Mr. Wilmington went into the dining-room, shutting the door very gently after him; and Harry, with light footsteps, ascended to his friend's bed-room.

The drawer full of papers was open, as I said, and Mr. Wilmington seeing one or two upon the floor, employed himself in picking them up, in order to return them to their place. It was a drawer, as I told you, in a sort of bureau writing-table, at which poor Selwyn was accustomed to write, and where his pens, paper, and writing apparatus lay just as he had left it the evening before. A half-finished letter, another signed and folded, but not put into the envelope—his seals and sealing-wax—all lay scattered about.

Mr. Wilmington picked up the papers. One of them was folded like a law paper. He had the curiosity to read the endorsement upon the back; when he had done so, he stood with it in his

hand for some time, musing deeply; he then slowly walked to the door, shut it, and very quietly pushed the bolt.

Having done so, he opened the paper.

In the meantime, Harry, seated by the bedside of his friend, who still slumbered quietly, was employed in considering what was best to be done.

The business which called him from town was of so urgent and important a nature, that it was impossible to postpone his journey. All he could do, was what he had done—delay his departure till the last moment, in hope of an opportunity of speaking to Selwyn. To set out without breaking the intelligence he had to communicate to his friend, and expose him to a sudden shock, was now more than ever to be dreaded. Might he but awaken in time, this composing sleep would no doubt have refreshed and strengthened him so far as to render it perfectly safe to make the commu-

nication; but Selwyn slept on; and he dared not awaken him.

Time passed; the clock on the chimney-piece raised its little silver voice, and told of quarter after quarter. What should he do?

At last he bethought himself that the best to do, would be to write and impart the intelligence as cautiously as he could by letter. This was unsatisfactory, but better than leaving the matter to chance; so, pen and paper being in the room, he sat down, and as carefully and tenderly as this mode of conveying ill news would admit of, he related the tale of the unfortunate Sumatra's fate. As a further precaution, having sealed and directed this letter, he inclosed it in another to Charles—in which he desired him to deliver this letter as soon as his master seemed recovered enough to bear a little anxiety, but by no means whatever till then, as it contained distressing news—charging him upon no account whatever to let him see a newspaper till he had read the letter.

And now the clock struck its quarters again; and the last had expired—and Henry stood by the bed of his friend, and gazed upon his sleeping

face for a few seconds with that tenderness and affection which never face was formed to express like his; and then he stole softly out of the room, and went down stairs.

As he ran down the last flight, however, with less precaution, the drawing-room door opened, and his father came out. Another of those impressions of the sense, which the intellect did not notice, but which the memory served afterwards to recall at the end of years—occurred again. He thought he heard the bolt of the drawing-room door drawn back.

There was a large clock in the hall; and Henry was shocked to find that the French clock in Selwyn's room was too late. He had not a moment to lose. Hastily bidding his father adieu, and telling him Selwyn was still asleep, and he had better not ask to see him, he caught up his hat and great-coat, and ran out of the house.

He never saw poor Selwyn again. The poor fellow was seized with a fresh paroxysm in the course of the following night, and breathed his last during the ensuing day.

There was an abatement of suffering before he

died, and he closed his eyes, leaving the most affectionate messages with his housekeeper for his dear friend and his family. Indeed, his whole thoughts seemed occupied with them alone, and with anxiety lest Henry should suffer from the idea of having been absent at this moment.

He suggested every possible motive of consolation for a circumstance which he knew that Henry would so deeply regret; and thus he departed from the world, generous, gentle, full of consideration for others to the last, and went to that brighter, better life, where all that is good, and wise, and great shall be found face to face in the sensible presence of the ineffable Father, Creator, and Saviour of all.

CHAPTER XIII.

Let such honours
And funeral rites, as to his birth and virtues
Are due, be first performed. DENHAM.

I SHALL not linger upon the next painful week, —most painful both for Henry and Caroline. The blank occasioned in both their lives by the loss of Selwyn was greater than even they could have anticipated. He had been so completely a part of themselves; his sympathy in their anxieties, in their joys, and his affection for them, had been so youthful and fervent, that they both felt, now he had really vanished from among them, that life had been robbed of one of its sweetest charms,

and a loss sustained that never could be repaired.

Henry felt this deeply, accepted lover though he was; but he probably felt it the more from the uncertainty that hung over his prospects. It is true, Mr. Craiglethorpe's death had relieved his father from a most urgent immediate danger, but it was only a reprieve. Selwyn, the direct heir of Mr. Craiglethorpe's property, was dead, and it seemed at present every one was in ignorance who the next heir might prove to be. Neither Selwyn nor Mr. Craiglethorpe had any near relations. No one appeared at present to put in a claim. Still, that a claim would be put in by some one or another before very long, it seemed impossible to doubt; and then the sum, and not only the sum, but the interest accumulating since Mr. Craiglethorpe's death, would have to be refunded to some stranger, who would be probably in the hands of some griping lawyer, and utterly without personal indulgence.

With such a cloud hanging over his own and his father's prospects, Henry felt it impossible to allow Flavia to link her fate with his. The time

was now rapidly approaching that she would be of age, and entitled to decide for herself. But till something could be settled he was resolved not to entangle her fate with his own. These cruel anxieties and resolutions added a bitterness and irritation to his grief, which rendered the week after Selwyn's death one of the darkest and most melancholy that he had yet known.

He shut himself up till the day of the funeral, and avoided being seen by any one. He was gloomy and hopeless;—Caroline was sorrowful and greatly depressed.

The day of the funeral was a bleak, cold March day. Every object wore that sombre, that excessively dismal and gloomy hue which pervades London in weather such as this. Selwyn had left a paper addressed to Henry, containing directions for his funeral, and telling him that he had appointed him executor to his will, which would be found in the upper drawer in the bureau which stood in the dining-room.

So everything had been arranged as directed, the whole affair being conducted in a manner as simple and free from parade as possible. Mr.

Wilmington and his son were the only mourners. Ever since Selwyn's death Mr. Wilmington had seemed unusually preoccupied and absent. Quite contrary to his usual habits, he would sit musing in his chair, absorbed in his own thoughts, for long intervals of time. Then, as if recollecting himself suddenly, begin to talk in a forced, unnatural manner.

Caroline and Henry were, to own the truth, rather gratified by this. They looked upon it as a tribute to the friends who were gone, which they had not expected from him. The feeling might be shown in rather a singular manner,—but it *was* feeling, and they were content to reverence it as such.

The day of the funeral the father and son were to return together to Portugal-street, to meet Selwyn's solicitor, and open and read the will. But as they were turning down Cumberland-street, the funeral having been at the little rural church of Kingsbury, Mr. Wilmington suddenly stopped the carriage and said,—

"I don't feel well, Harry. I had better go home. It is not necessary that I should be pre-

sent at the reading of a will from which I have nothing to expect. I think I have got a chill;—it is horribly cold. Put me down at the corner of Seymour-street, and I will walk home."

"You do not look well, indeed, sir," said Henry; for the first time perceiving how extremely pale and nervous he seemed. "Let me take you to the door."

"No; put me down here. I shall be better for a walk; I am desperately cold."

He looked quite blue.

Harry persisted; but he was not to be persuaded. He walked home, but with apparent difficulty; and when he reached his own house, was in so violent a shivering fit, that Caroline and Lizzy, both frightened, insisted upon his going to bed,—which he did; but he would not allow them to send for a doctor, declaring that wine whey and a night's rest would set all right again.

Harry pursued his way to Portugal-street, and here he was met by Selwyn's solicitor. The will was found in the drawer where Selwyn had directed him to look for it, and where the solicitor

had himself seen it deposited, when it was finally executed some six months or so ago. It was opened and read: by it, the bulk of his fortune was bequeathed to his uncle, Mr. Craiglethorpe; twenty thousand pounds to Harry; ten to Caroline; handsome rings to his various friends; and large legacies to his three servants. Mr. and Mrs. Wilmington were kindly portioned legacies of plate and china, and five hundred pounds a-piece, to buy rings, bequeathed to them.

So far so good. But, lo and behold! there was a small codicil.

The codicil was written upon a sheet of common writing-paper, and in a hurried uncertain hand; it was excessively brief. In few words it stated, that having just heard of the lamentable death of his uncle, Mr. Craiglethorpe, the testator wished to cancel his will; but feeling too ill to send for or see his solicitor, he left this paper, which he trusted no one would dispute. The dispositions of the codicil were very simple. The whole of the property to which he might lay claim as heir to Mr. Craiglethorpe, with half his own fortune, was left to Mr. Wilmington; the other half to

Harry; Mr. Wilmington being executor and residuary legatee,—all the legacies in the will being confirmed. The possibility that Mr. Craiglethorpe should have survived the catastrophe had evidently never entered his thoughts. Harry could not help regretting that some provision, should this event, however improbable, occur, had not been made; but was not surprised, in the evident hurry in which the paper had been drawn up, that it had not been done.

The signature to this paper seemed written with more care than the other portions. It was firm and distinct; the rest had evidently been penned in haste and with difficulty. It was impossible, it was not in human nature, for Harry to feel insensible to this proof of his friend's attachment and generous love for his interests and those of his family; the bequest was indeed most well-timed—most kindly and affectionately done. His heart swelled as he looked at the paper, and thought of the poor, trembling hand, now for ever still, which had traced these uncertain lines with so much apparent difficulty; and the tears stood in his eyes as the solicitor, folding up the

codicil, turned round to shake hands and congratulate him.

You will not be much interested to hear how Mr. Wilmington received the news of this signal piece of good fortune; or the unbounded exultation of Lizzy. Her raptures she did not attempt to conceal; nor could Caroline or Henry endeavour to disguise their feelings of disgust. Restored to affluence, no longer an object of consideration and pity, she was become almost insupportable to them. They agreed that the first benefit to be derived from their share of the inheritance, should be, to release themselves from this disagreeable companionship, and take a house for themselves.

Henry's scruples were now of course at an end, and he made preparations for his marriage taking place during the course of the summer; and he and Flavia decided to go down into Wales, and live upon one of her estates; and to ask Caroline to come and live with them.

It may be as well to mention, as a proof of the affection with which poor Selwyn was regarded by his servants, that old Charles, whose health

had suffered a good deal by his attendance, took his master's death so earnestly to heart, that it was thought advisable to remove him from the house before the funeral should take place: he went to visit a brother of his, who lived at some distance from London; having first exacted a promise that he should be allowed to follow his master to the grave. But by some accident or other, he never received the letter naming the day, which Henry had written to him; and he did not arrive in town till two days after it was over. His signature and that of the housekeeper were appended as witnesses to the codicil.

Mr. Wilmington showed much good nature in exerting himself to get good places for the two female servants. For the housekeeper he provided an excellent one in Northumberland; for the cook, in Devonshire. Caroline and Henry were pleased with this proof of kind anxiety for their welfare. It seemed as if his unparalleled good fortune had softened his heart. Had the golden cup of the pilgrim, thrust in at the window, produced the right effect?

Time will show. For the present, at least, Mr.

Wilmington is certainly a more thoughtful and apparently a better man.

He returned to his beautiful house at Roehampton, but could not be persuaded, as yet, by Lizzy, to reinhabit his splendid mansion in Belgrave-square. He seemed to have lost, in some degree, his taste for show and expense. He had indeed shot his last bolt. This fortune exhausted, there was no second Craiglethorpe, no second inheritance to replenish his purse. Perhaps it was this consideration—perhaps all he had suffered,—and he had suffered more than they were any of them aware of, which had sobered him. Lizzy, however, remained just the same—shallow, vain, heartless, and selfish as ever.

The marriage of Henry and Flavia took place during the ensuing summer; after which, they settled in Wales, Caroline living with them.

They all loved a country life, and they were all alike indifferent to general society. They left Mr. and Mrs. Wilmington to enjoy their taste for

great dinners and great parties; and they very seldom came to London. There I will leave them for about three years, each member of the family circle happy in their own way, and as happy as people can possibly expect to be in this life. And this ends part the second of my story.

PART III.

CHAPTER I.

She struck where the white and fleecy waves
Looked soft as carded wool;
But the cruel rocks they gored her side,
Like the horns of an angry bull.

LONGFELLOW.

THE captain paced the deck, looking up from time to time anxiously at the threatening sky.

All the canvas was spread; the very sky-scrapers expanded their white wings against the azure vault; but the speaking-trumpet was heard, its loud voice calling all hands to the shrouds, and all sails to be furled with the utmost expedition. Now the good seaman looked at the heavens—now anxiously at the masts, where his orders were

being obeyed with the utmost possible speed; but it was too late.

It was not the usual time of year for the tornadoes. The officers had been dining below, the watch had been remiss in observing the slight signs which had indicated the coming tempest. It was too late for the preparations to be completed, and for the good ship to be made ready to meet the desperate struggle.

Half the sails were yet unfurled, when the tempest burst upon her in all its fury, shivering every sheet that remained displayed, to rags.

The wind roared like some fierce demon, hungry to devour his prey; the sea, late so calm, rose mountains high; the blue lightning flashed and flared round the horizon like some curtain of flame; and the electric fire ran along the chains and iron-work of the devoted vessel. Down poured the rain in torrents—in a deluge. The sky was darkened above, the waters yawned beneath; the lurid flashes alone gave light from moment to moment, and pointed to the inevitable destruction.

All was hurry and dismay:—the rush and

trampling of the sailors;—the shrill loud calling of the speaking-trumpet;—the wail of women—the cries of little frightened children—the agonised looks of fathers and husbands. The countenance of the captain, collected and stern, yet pale as death, added to the dire effect of the tremendous scene. A small, lean, wrinkled, yellow, bent old man stood by himself upon the deck, and looked around him.

He had no wife, no child, no friend on board, for whom to care or feel; but he had some sympathy with the captain, for whom he had a great esteem, and, therefore, knowing he could not assist, his only anxiety was not to trouble him. He therefore stood somewhat apart from the general turmoil, his sharp brown eye intent upon what was going on, watching the progress of the storm. Suddenly a voice was heard louder than the voice of the tempest; the main-mast had fallen, men were killed and maimed, and groans of agony were added to the scenes of terror. "The leak! the leak!—all hands to the pumps!"

In spite of her high reputation, the vessel had left Calcutta in some respects not such as ought to

have been permitted. Why this had been, it is useless to relate, but so it was.

The old man began to anticipate the worst. I call him the old man; but he was not quite so old as his lean, wizened figure and face might have led you to believe. He stood still, at that place near the bulwarks which he had at first taken, steadied himself by a rope, gazed into the dark gulph of whelming waters, and thus he meditated:—

"And this, then, is the end of it all! You and your hard-earned riches; your ingots, your diamonds, your bills of exchange;—down, down to the fathomless depths of the ocean;—food for fishes—food for fishes."

Then he cast a hurried retrospect over that life of more than sixty years; which had been so earnest, so busy, so indefatigable; and he asked himself what he had done. It was a dry and dreary picture. He had laboured for himself—that was what he had done; laboured hard, and most successfully, to ensure to himself the means of enjoyment,—and now he was coming home to enjoy.

And must he go down into the deep before the enjoyment for which he thirsted had been even tasted? Into that land of darkness, which to him was a grave indeed; where there was "neither work nor desire, nor knowledge nor wisdom; in the grave" to which he thought himself going.

He cast his eyes upon those living, anxious beings, with which the deck was crowded; upon husbands clasping their wives to their hearts, and begging them to take courage; upon tender mothers whispering the consolations of faith to their terrified little ones, telling them of one whose path is on the mighty waters, and who will not forsake us even amidst the shadows of death. And he felt how entirely he was alone.

Was there any one on earth for whom he cared, or who cared for him?

Yes; there were two. But they were far away; safe in that England, that cynosure of all his aspirations, which now he must never see.

There was that old schoolboy pet,—some fifteen years or more younger than himself,—that gay, handsome lad, whom he had loved as a child, delighted in as a youth, and taken pride in as a

man; to whom he was intending to return,—no longer a poor friend, treated with affection, though in far less brilliant circumstances than the young Wilmington he was so proud of; but with a splendid fortune, able to cope with, nay outshine his friend, and to dazzle him in his turn with a splendour which even he would find it hard to equal. And there was Selwyn, the child of his sister, whom he had left a little fellow about ten years old.

He thought of these, and of a few other old croneys, with whom he had exchanged sarcastic wit, and brief, petty converse; and of all his castles in the air, more splendid, and, as he thought, far more substantial, than the far-famed palace of Aladdin.

Of the splendid mansion, the noble park, the troops of deer, that were to have been his, and of the eastern gems and treasures that were to have adorned his halls. Of the feasts he was to give; the choice companionship he was to enjoy; of Wilmington adorning his circle,—not as a matter almost of condescension for past kindness,—but as an equal, though a favourite guest.

And he sighed. It was only one sigh that firm, determined heart cast over the blighted prospect;—and then the shock came; she had been driven on a hidden rock—she struck, and the dreadful cry "she has parted!" was followed by the rushing of the overwhelming waves.

The weaker were swept at once from the deck; some of the stronger and more dexterous contrived to lower the boats, to spring in. And now the ship heaved like a living creature; she seemed to make one desperate struggle for existence, and then went down head-foremost.

The eddy spread wide its circling waves, threatening to suck every boat into the fatal whirlpool: it was the danger but of a moment: the storm began to subside; the lightning gave forth faint streams of fire; the thunder rolled fainter and fainter; the wind lulled; the waves heaved with a lulling motion.

The waters had passed over her, and she was gone, with all her treasures, to the land of forgetfulness; if not with five hundred men, yet with a number never known, never even counted. There lie their bones to whiten in the caves of the sea-

monsters; their wealth to be gathered to the buried riches which the ocean has swallowed in his ravenous maw. There suddenly the tale of their lives is stopped short: their hopes, their schemes, their plans, and their wishes,—their affections and their hatreds,—their grand intentions and their selfish regards,—there they are all gone down into the green, unfathomable deeps together.

A few that escaped in one of the boats were cast upon a howling, desert shore. There was no foot of even the most savage man to be discerned. Nature appeared as she must have done before she was surrendered into the hands of that being, formed, though imperfectly, in the image of his Maker, to whom it was given to possess it, and to subdue it.

Wide plains were there, where the zebra and the buffalo, and the antelope, in myriads, were feeding. Tangled bush, formed of all the wondrous vegetation of the tropics, where the

palm and the cotton-tree were matted together by the festoons of the creepers, and the curious orchidacea that fed upon their branches.

The wild Guinea grass grew above their heads. The very herbage was impenetrable to poor, shrinking, helpless man, despoiled of all his means of struggling with nature. Empty-handed, barely clothed, and hungering for food and for water; while the dreadful roar of the lions and leopards, and beasts of prey, was heard as the evening approached, and the carnivori sallied forth upon their appointed task, to keep down the swarming and helpless myriads which fed upon the vegetable nature.

Did they any of them survive?

Was it worth their while even to survive?

Society had closed over them. Before they could return they would have long been counted among the dead, and their places would have been swept away.

The waves of the constantly-flowing social life would have passed over them, and they be as effectually submerged as those who slept in the deep sea.

Nothing is so piteous, nothing so affecting to me, as the tales of these long-lost mariners, who have been long counted among the dead, and who, after years of heroic struggle and incredible hardship, at last attain the haven of civilized life, and find there no harbour for them.

Nobody wants them—their place is filled. If they had money, it has been taken by their heirs; and who wishes to be called upon to restore it? If they had none, they are beggars, without a home or a prospect. Their means of life, their plans, their connections with the world, have all disappeared from the scene. The weather-beaten sailor has to begin the world again.

What became of that dry, wizen-faced, wrinkled man? with his sharp intelligent eyes, like those of some demon, rather than those of a human being,—though not of an altogether unkindly demon; for he had something that was not alone quickness of intellect, he had a good deal of real

genuine feeling under his dry caustic ways? This greediness of gain had never led him to practise any of that barbarous injustice, too common, I fear, in those days, upon that Eastern stage, where the poor gentle Hindoos figured like the vegetable-eaters of desert Africa; and the Europeans too well represented the carnivori, sent there to keep them down.

It was a pity he was lost. For, had he returned to England, it is possible that, with his dispositions, he might have taken it into his head to devote part of his immense wealth to some noble work of charity; besides, how he might have encouraged art! Think of that!

Ay, but remember, he might have become a proud, heartless, greedy sensualist. He had so bad an opinion of mankind, that all his better aspirations might have been blighted by that baneful tendency. He might, as some very rich men do, have grown harder and harder, and colder and colder, and his heart have shrivelled up till it was dry and withered as a perished root; from which nothing vernal again could spring—only fitted to be cast into the fire.

Think of that, and you will agree with me, that it would have been far, far better to sink like lead in the mighty waters, with his head full of as yet,innocent schemes of enjoyment; and his heart yearning inwardly to his country and his friends.

It was a small, ill-built, inconvenient timber-ship, sailing from the western coast of Africa,—from Sierra Leone, I believe,—that was labouring up the river, the wind being in her favour, but against the tide. The motley crew of ill-looking white men, swarthy and pirate-like-looking Maroons and negroes, scarcely redeemed from the savage life of the bush, was in consonance with the black, heavy hull, the short ill-formed masts, the dingy canvas and tackle, and the dirty deck of the unpromising craft they had guided through storm and calm, to the teeming river Thames.

A man sat upon the deck above the steerage, dressed in an old brown coat, which had once been

snuff colour, but the original colour had long been lost amid the injuries of time; it was now of a dark, dirty hue, and bore the evidence of weary days in its forlorn and tattered appearance. An old, napless hat was upon his head; a dirty checked handkerchief round his neck; his waistcoat and nether garments were of a piece with the rest; and his travel-worn shoes would hardly hold together. He leaned upon a staff formed of the wild wood of Africa, and mused and gazed, as the vessel slowly and heavily made way.

He was thinner, more wrinkled, more wizened, more time and weather-worn, than when we took leave of him, as the noble East-Indiaman parted upon the rock; and the handsome, though somewhat careless dress which he then wore, had gradually been defaced, if I may use the term, till it had assumed the beggarly aspect which it had now. But in spite of the shrivelled limbs, meagre features, and miserable attire, there was that in the man that you could not look upon without a certain interest and curiosity. There was something in his face that poverty could not depress, nor hardships degrade; the eye—that

window of the soul—was still clear, bright, sharp, and intelligent; and still a something one could not help liking, was to be detected in his grim smile.

He had endured a terrible voyage home. The man who started from India surrounded with every luxury and appliance which it was possible to accumulate upon ship-board, and carrying with him the means of commanding every comfort and enjoyment that gold could procure upon land—had lain with this motley crew of wretches, rather than seamen, in the steerage, for sixteen weeks—the heavy timber with which the ship was laden impeding her progress, on the one hand; the miserable crew with which he was surrounded, by their mismanagement, exposing it to all sort of danger, on the other. The vessel reeked with villainous stench of rancid palm-oil, which formed part of its cargo—smelling of the bilge-water which daily was pumped up by pumps kept constantly at work, to keep down the leak; his food had been mouldy biscuit, junk hard as iron, filthy water, without coffee, tea, milk, or fresh provision of any kind. Yet he had preserved his impertur-

bable serenity of aspect;—had been just the same dry, composed, caustic character, as upon the deck of the East-Indiaman; had never seemed to be the least affected by the intense heat, when the tropical sun beat upon the deck; or by the biting cold of the chops of the Channel, when in raw, ungenial weather they arrived there. He seemed impenetrable to outward evils, and went on just in his usual way, walking about, watching everything, and saying little or nothing.

He seemed to have quite matter enough for rumination to employ him; and there, as he sat upon the deck in his tattered garments, and with just ten shillings and a few coppers left in his pocket, he gazed about him, smiling all the time with a sort of quiet inward smile, which he had; and thought of his own prudence and precaution, in having transmitted a large sum to England, far more than sufficient for any purpose that he could possibly want; and he revelled in the idea of the contrast between his future wealth, ease, and consequence, and his present poverty and degradation.

It was a dull, hazy evening; no bright lights

shone upon the Culvers or illuminated the low Essex, or the wooded Kentish shores. The wind whistled among the shrouds; the red-sailed fishing-boats, the grim colliers, the large and lofty Indiamen, floated idly along. At last they reached the Pool, crowded with a forest of masts,—made their way amid the confusion,—heaved to, and were close to land.

The other and more important passengers—for there were one or two cabin passengers upon this horrid craft—leapt ashore; the old man appeared on deck, carrying a blue pocket-hankerchief in his hand, which contained the whole of his worldly goods.

CHAPTER II.

Waning—waning—ever waning,
Life's full glory pales away—
Fast the youth, there's no regaining,
Darkens down in swift decay;
Hopes—despairing—smiles and sorrows—
Blossoms flush them but to fall—
All life's judging death still borrows—
Shrouds and graves are waiting all.

Slowly—the last of all the impatient voyagers; his old hat drawn over his brows, his blue bundle in his hand,—the weather-beaten and time-worn wayfarer crossed the little wooden bridge which led to the pier; but when arrived there, he did not hurry forward like the rest through the foul and dirty streets, amid staggering wains, heavy carts, grim custom-house porters, weather-worn seamen, disorderly boys, and all the dirty rabble that salute one upon reaching the quays of

the richest, the grandest, and the most luxurious, and I should suppose, take it all in all, the cleanest metropolis in the world. No yearning hearts of loving relations were beating to welcome his return, —no cheerful fire was blazing up,—no comfortable meal ready prepared by loving hands for him. The dark, dirty, miry city before him,—the dull, colourless sky over head, whence already the rain began slowly to mizzle, was but a type of that dreary feeling with which the stranger stepped upon his native shore. He paused, turned round, and stood still upon the wooden pier, thinking of what he should do.

Fifteen years since he had quitted his native land, four since he had received the slightest intelligence from it. What changes would have, and had taken place, since he quitted England, of which he was aware,—which he could anticipate; what changes might have taken place, of which he knew nothing; of the few left that he in the least degree cared for, who might be among the living, who among the dead; who in this fluctuating world occupying the same position as when he had last heard of them? The only two

among this few that he cared for at all,—whom he might be said to care for much,—were, as I have said, his nephew, Albert Selwyn, and his old pet and favourite, Mr. Wilmington. Albert he could not feel any personal affection for; he had left home when he was a boy of about ten years old, but he had loved the boy in his way; and if he might rely upon the intercourse of letters, that boy had loved and still loved him.

He had during the leisure for meditation afforded by the voyage, often thought upon the expressions of his gratitude and affection with much pleasure,—a pleasure only damped by his fear for Selwyn's health, which was of acknowledged delicacy, and a sort of dread that he should find him worse, and in a declining state, if still alive. He had looked, therefore, with more despondency than hope to this side of his prospects; but not so as regarded Wilmington.

Wilmington he had left a fine handsome man, of about thirty, to whom he was fondly,—nay foolishly, attached. He knew that—he felt that Wilmington did not altogether perhaps merit his partiality; but that was no matter to him. He

liked the man,—he was proud of him,—he was fond of him;—the perfect contrast between himself and this handsome, showy, dashing fellow was delightful to him. Nothing used to please him better than to go into the Park on a Sunday, and walk side by side with this fine young man, and observe the admiration he inspired, or that he fancied he inspired; he loved to listen to his flashy but lively talk, and drop every now and then one of his own cynical, pithy sentences into the sparkling torrent of mere words. I have seen that small, thin, yellow, and even then, withered and wizened man, walking up and down, his eye fixed with the greatest satisfaction upon Wilmington, as, mounted upon a showy steed, he figured rather indifferently as a horseman among the throng. But Craiglethorpe was no judge of horsemanship, and thought his appearance prodigiously fine.

He loved to lounge into the counting-house of Wilmington, Jones, Estcourt, & Co., merchants in the city, and chat with his friend, who was rarely to be seen at his desk, but would be sauntering up and down in a somewhat pompous

and stately manner, receiving intelligence and giving orders.

It was strange, how completely such a sharp observer as Craiglethorpe was taken in with all this fuss and show. I believe he thought Wilmington the finest gentleman in the world; but he had not been much accustomed to gentlemen: he came up from Scotland to sweep the floor of the counting-house in which he rose to be a partner; that house was now smashed; but he had redeemed his own losses, and managed to realize a splendid fortune in India.

Well, he stood there, gazing and meditating where he should first go; and the result of his ruminations was, that he would go to the house of business in Mincing-lane, the street where the firm of Wilmington, Jones, and Estcourt had their location.

It was now only four o'clock, and the hours of business would not be over, or the house closed: if he made the best of his way, he might possibly catch Wilmington there. He resisted the application for a hackney-coach, and chose to walk the well-known alleys and streets that led to Mincing-

lane by a short cut from the river. The narrow street looked dismal as ever; but the same names of firms were, with few exceptions, over the doors as when he had visited it last. He glanced his eye from one to the other; soon descried the house of business,—once his friend's,—and, without glancing at the plate upon the door, entered the counting-house.

But Wilmington, of course, was not to be seen. The clerks were at their desks plying their goose-quills, but none of the partners were present.

"I want to see Mr. Wilmington—is he within?" asked the poverty-stricken stranger, of one of the porters.

"Mr. Wilmington, sir? I beg your pardon—some mistake. Mr. Wilmington is not a partner in the house now. Mr. Jones, or Mr. Estcourt, probably?"

"Heigh!—humph!—not in the house? What is that you say? Ay—yes—well—if Jones or Estcourt are at home, I'll speak to them."

The old porter stared at this way of naming gentlemen to his imagination of more consequence

than the great Mogul himself, and by a wretched, beggarly-looking old fellow too; and he answered somewhat haughtily, that Mr. Jones and Mr. Estcourt were probably not at present in the house, and if they were, most likely too busy to be seen.

"Go and inquire, will you, please?" said Craiglethorpe; not, however, offering the half-crown, the customary attendant upon such applications,—not even the shilling. Mr. Craiglethorpe was one who never paid other people's servants for doing their own duty.

The old porter hesitated — hummed and hawed.

"Go and tell them, you old harpy," said Craiglethorpe testily, and perfectly comprehending the cause of the man's hesitation,—"that an old gentleman of their acquaintance, lately returned from abroad, wishes to speak with one of them. Do what I ask you," he added, seeing the old man still hesitated; "or when I *do* see them, I'll tell them their porter cannot be got to do a poor man's errand—however important it may be to themselves—of which he knows nothing; that is, with-

out he can extort a shilling, which I, for one, won't pay."

The porter upon this sulkily advanced to an inner door, and opening it, said there was a man wanted to speak either to Mr. Estcourt or to Mr. Jones.

"What sort of a man?" was heard in the hoarse croaking voice of Mr. Jones. "I'm busy now; tell him to call again to-morrow."

"Say to-morrow won't do."

"Sir, he says to-morrow won't do."

"What sort of a man is he?"

The porter entered the room before he answered —"Some poor, ragged, shipwrecked fellow, I fancy, by his look; come to beg a little trifle or so at your hands."

"Is that all?—Here, give him five shillings, and tell him to go about his business."

The man returned, and offered the money, with the assurance that the gentlemen were both too busy to be spoken with.

"You scoundrel!" cried Craiglethorpe, indignantly refusing the money; "who told you to ask for money for *me?* Was that what I wanted to

see the partners for? But why should I see them, after all? I dare say, you can any of you tell me what I want to know?" said he, turning to the row of scribbling clerks, who now sat most of them, pen arrested on its way to inkstand, observing him,—"You can any of you tell me why Mr. Wilmington withdrew from the firm, and where he is to be found now?"

"Withdrew!" repeated one of the young gentlemen, in a somewhat sarcastic tone.

"Why, what do you mean?" asked Craiglethorpe, going up to him.

"*Drew*—not *with*," said the young gentleman, who felt himself inclined to set up for something in the line of Mr. Estcourt,—"*drew*, and somewhat too largely; till the other partners found it incumbent upon them, I believe, to hint at the *with* you have been pleased to make use of, as a proper addition to the draw. And so Mr. Wilmington became no longer a partner in the house."

The expression of Craiglethorpe's face—though his was a countenance used rather to hide than reveal what passed within—betrayed how much he was shocked at this unexpected intelligence.

He did not speak for a few minutes; not until, with some effort, he had recovered his usual coolness and composure. He stood there while the clerks stared at him.

There was a something of authority in his tone and manner which contrasted so strangely with his mean and miserable appearance. At last he said,

"Well, and what is become of him?"

"Oh, become of him, sir? Mr. Wilmington is one always sure to fall upon his feet. Never was there a man with so much resource. Money seems literally to flow in upon him. He's living in the old place, just in the old style, or rather more magnificently. His son has married a great heiress; and he himself has come into a large fortune, I've heard. Mr. Estcourt and Jones were rather in too great a hurry to get rid of him, maybe."

"Very likely," responded the strange visitor, visibly brightening at this account. "Then Mr. Wilmington is still to be found either at Wimbledon or in Belgrave-square?"

"Unless he is gone down to his son's seat in Wales," with something rather like a sneer.

Craiglethorpe left the apartment without a word more.

"Queer old fellow, that," said one youngster to a senior.

The senior replied,

"I wish I were his heir."

"Now you'll see," put in another, "if Wilmington, after all his luck in money matters, will not find something turning up in that quarter."

And so they chatted away, whilst the subject of their speculations having this time hired a hackney coach at the first stand he came to, was in that jumbling vehicle jolting along to Belgrave-square.

He stopped before one of the large houses in the centre, and the coachman descended slowly to knock, and when that was unavailing, to ring; upon which a small footboy appeared at the area gate, which was locked, and inquired what he wanted, as the family was out of town, and the servants left in charge of the house too busy, he might have added, entertaining a festive party

below, to attend to the door, or any other of their master's concerns or interests.

"Ask where Mr. Wilmington now is?" said a voice from within the coach.

"Don't know, sir."

"Ask whether there is any one within that I can speak to?"

The boy descended, and after some delay, a fat, rosy-looking footman, his mouth yet filled with the good things he was devouring, came hastily up the steps, and in an insolent sort of manner told him to let him know his business, and be quiet.

Mr. Craiglethorpe now put his head to the window and bade the fellow, in an authoritative tone, open the area door, and come and speak to him. "They showed the whip, and the slaves fled." The tone of authority which was assumed, even though it proceeded from one riding in a jarvey, startled the man. He opened the area door, and came out; but when he saw the poor, beggarly creature which had addressed him in this high tone, he became angry and insolent.

"Where's your master?"

"Mr. Wilmington? Not here."

"Out of town?"

"I suppose so, if he ain't in town."

"At Wimbledon?"

"Where else should he be?"

Such was the style of the servant's answers.

Now Mr. Craiglethorpe was just that sort of man to take very unjust offence. His feelings were very much more susceptible than any one gave him credit for, or than he was himself aware of. He felt things keenly. He loved so few, and cared for the love of so few, that it was seldom his affections were called into play; and when they were not, he minded little; but when his affections *were* concerned, he felt things excessively. Little things that others might have overlooked wounded him sorely. But he kept his feelings so to himself that no one was aware of their existence. No one could, therefore, in his boyhood have been aware of the necessity of controlling them, and he was not in the least aware of this necessity himself. He passed for one that had better feel a great deal more than he did, rather than for one who ought to restrain his sensibilities. The con-

sequence was, when such were excited, they were as confused and tumultuous and as little reasonable as those of a mere child.

It would seem almost incredible, that the insolence with which he found himself treated at the door of his dearest friend, by this menial, wounded and offended him. The damp it threw upon his feelings; the sort of indignant sorrow which it raised in his heart, was as unreasonable as it was great. To be thus forgotten and thus treated at that man's door, where he had once been greeted so warmly, and where he never entered but to be honoured for his wealth, and loved, as he thought, for himself. He sat there, deeply hurt. He would not declare his name, which he knew would at once insure respect,—servility even, from the insolent domestic; with a curious, but common inconsistency, he was angry at being treated as what he appeared, instead of as what he knew that he was. He spent some little time endeavouring to reprove the man for his insolence, at which the fellow only laughed outright, and retreated down the area stairs, locking the gate,

while the coachman snivelled as he mounted his box, and proceeded with his beggarly fare, as he esteemed it, to Wimbledon. It was a melancholy, painful journey.

Was it one of those presentiments which such characters as Mr. Craiglethorpe's were perhaps more than commonly prone to? Was it the result of the feelings excited by the manner of the man-servant? Was it that the body was beginning to be very weary, and that invincible spirit to give way a little? Certain it is, this strange, inconsistent man, who had borne with unconquerable courage and fortitude the perils and sufferings of so many years, felt his heart fail him for the first time, as he jumbled uncomfortably along.

The carriage mounted Putney-hill, and now the sweet breezes of Wimbledon-common, blowing over the gorse and heath, salute him. The rain has cleared away, the sun in a yellow misty gleaming glory is sinking, and his last rays tint the green and beautiful plantations that surround him. Gay equipages glance from time to time

by—children are swimming boats upon some of the little ponds—cattle and sheep are grazing—geese wandering over the short herbage;—a sweet suburban scene it is, as beautiful a scene in its way as many a more rural one.

And its influences are felt. Old memories of how he has crossed this common, a younger and a gayer man, to share in the Sunday parties at his friend's. Of the jovial dinners, when the wine circulated so freely, and the joke and laugh were exchanged; those pleasant feasts—the hospitable table,—the cordial meetings—of walks upon the common after church—of all the pleasures which the villa life affords to the tired worshipper and hunter after Mammon, rise to his recollection, and his gloomy imaginations vanish. He fancies himself clasped to the heart of his friend. Strange and unnatural you may perhaps imagine such tender thoughts to be on the part of this world-hardened and apparently most dry and prosaic man; but in every heart of any value there is a sacred corner kept in reserve for thoughts and for feelings of this description; and

it is to me most pleasing when I discern these little gleams of tenderness and romance, bursting forth from behind the case-hardened outside of one apparently only made for business, to slave and to gain.

CHAPTER III.

The paradise I dreamed I have not found.
T. E. Reade.

The coach stops at the gates, and the old woman totters out, key in hand, to fling the splendid iron gates open; and open they flew, with hideous rebound and jarring sound.

And now Mr. Craiglethorpe's face is at the window: he can resist the influence of curiosity no longer: he is intently watching all the changes

that the place, during his long absence, has undergone.

A great many alterations there had been; but every alteration has been an advance in splendour and luxury.

Evidently the world had prospered with Wilmington, and so far he is very cordially glad. He was not of a nature given to envy;—that poisonous venom which had made a portion of the unhealthy influences to which his heart was but too subject. He loved to see his friends flourish. All are not capable of even this poor virtue. He loved to see it, for he had generally been flourishing himself; and, to his praise be it said, he could rejoice in it now, though his own last years had been so unfortunate. He rejoiced in it, without reference to himself, even as regarded the safety of his hundred thousand pounds. He never had questioned the security of that, and did not at that moment, indeed, think of it at all.

Passed through the splendid gates, which were new, the coach trundled along the gravel road,

which, winding round a lawn, kept with the most minute attention to neatness, bordered by plantations of most rare and beautiful shrubs, and adorned with a few magnificent trees, fell from the house upon every side but one, that upon which the offices and stables stood; and they were so well planted out, that they appeared only as a grove, above which, the vane of the weather-cock sparkling in the sun might be seen.

This lawn too, was new. There had not been the same extent of dressed grounds before; there had been a few fields and a smaller pleasure ground. The house, too, seemed magnified; and so it certainly was; and the Grecian portico supported upon giant Ionic pillars, which looked so classical and imposing, was certainly an addition.

Altogether things looked so very grand, that even Craiglethorpe, little as he heeded such matters—little as he had been accustomed to meet with any man wealthier or more important than himself, began to feel the influence of this splendour in some slight degree, and to wonder whether

he should find his friend unchanged, amid all these changes.

And now the jarvey arrives at the portico, rattles behind the magnificent columns, and stops at the gilt and mahogany door,—a world too fine for an outer door, in every eye but that of Mr. Wilmington and his Lizzy.

The coachman again, in his heavy, dirty coat and battered hat, tumbles rather than descends from his box, and rings.

The loud ring of the bell may be heard echoing through the lofty apartments of the spacious mansion; and two footmen in liveries of pink, white, and silver, presented themselves at the door.

"Is Mr. Wilmington at home?—Let me out, can't you?" cries Craiglethorpe, to the hackney-coachman, who is waiting for an answer to the first question before he proceeds to liberate his fare.

"Let me out, can't you? What are you waiting for?"

And the man with some difficulty turns the broken hasp. The steps rattle down, and Mr. Craiglethorpe descending hastily, without further ceremony prepares to enter the house.

But he is interrupted by the fine gentlemen within.

"Your card, sir, if you please. I will inquire whether Mr. Wilmington *is* at home."

"Suppose I have no card?" answered Mr. Craiglethorpe, endeavouring impatiently to force an entrance. "Where is your master, Mr. Wilmington?—where?—where, young man?" for now his heart began to beat, and his breath to fail him, in strange unwonted emotion.

"I will go and inquire;—your name, sir, if you please?"

"No matter for my name—no matter for my name; I shall be welcome, never fear, young man."

"But, sir, . . . Mr. Wilmington . . ."

But opposition polite, such as those well-bred servants might offer, was in vain.

He has already passed the threshold; he stands in the lofty hall, painted in the most elaborate style, to imitate the rarest marbles, glittering with gilding, and adorned with suits of armour, trophies of arms, and rarities from every quarter of the globe; amid which the traveller, with a secret pleasure, remarks some magnificent shells and gorgeous specimens of eastern splendour, presented by himself.

A moment he paused and gazed around, then saying, "Which door?" laid his hand upon the lock of the nearest, and before the astonished footman could interfere, had opened it and entered.

The windows were opened to the flower garden and lawn; the white curtains rose and fell as the wind, rather fresher this evening than usual, came floating into the room, laden with the delicious perfume from the large beds of mignonette. Everything, even to the beds of mignonette, being upon the largest and most profuse scale, in and about this mansion.

You recollect the room, perhaps; I favoured you with a somewhat tedious description of it before; but you will please to fancy it now very much more gaudy and showy; inasmuch as Mrs. Wilmington's taste has now been exercised upon it for three or four years, so that it is absolutely crowded with all sorts of useless, expensive, and, as some think, beautiful toys, and bits of choice furniture.

There was no one in it but a lady, tall and slender, with a fine face and complexion, abundance of ringlets of soft brown hair, and dressed in an elegant and extremely fashionable sort of négligé, who lay extended upon a sofa, amid cushions of broidered satin, reading the last new novel. Perhaps you know her, too, again. She was so deeply engaged in her studies, that she did not hear the door open; but the bustle of the footman, who now hurried up, interfering with—"Really, sir; you must not, sir, ... Mrs. Wilmington, sir," aroused her; and starting up, this tall,

fair creature, all pink ribbons and white muslin, confronted the astonished stranger.

Her astonishment was at least equal to his.

He had only expected to meet Mr. Wilmington, and was astounded for the moment when he stumbled upon this beautiful young lady. She stood as if struck dumb with amazement, to see this little, ill-looking, yellow, ugly, and, so please you, somewhat dirty-looking old man, dressed in his tattered suit of rusty-brown, thus unceremoniously intruding himself into her dining-room.

"Madam!" he said.

"Sir!" she replied, measuring him haughtily from head to foot; and then turning to her servants, she said, with considerable displeasure in her tone,—

"Show this man into some other room, if you please. Why do you disturb me here?"

"He would come in; we couldn't prevent him. Sir," began both footmen at once, "be pleased to walk out."

Whilst the lady turned scornfully away, and approached the window.

But Mr. Craiglethorpe shook off the servants. Not ill-humouredly, though. He was inclined to smile at the odd mistake they were all making; he was too happy, too bewildered, to think of being offended.

"Let me alone, my good fellows, will you?" said he, good-humouredly; I know very well what I'm about. Is that then Mrs. Wilmington? The new one; your master's young wife?"

"That's Mrs. Wilmington, sir."

"And your master?"

"Master is not at home. If you'd have listened to us, you might have spared yourself this trouble, and us a good ..... But come away, sir; come away, won't you?" They went on in a coaxing sort of way; for they both began to think the intruder must be some unfortunate madman.

He listened not, but approached Mrs. Wilmington. And now his eye twinkled, and he

breathed hard, and a faint flush just tinted his sallow and weather-beaten cheek; and he said, endeavouring to take her hand, and with a merry smile,—

"Are *you* my friend's wife? Tell me where he is to be found now."

"Sir!" she exclaimed, again drawing herself up, "who may you be?"

"One too much changed by toil and hardship for the beautiful Eliza Emerson to remember," was his reply.

"Remember!" retreating farther towards the window, as he held out his hand; and drawing her dress together, as if she feared infection even from the touch of one of such ignoble appearance.—"Remember! Eliza Emerson! I protest, sir, I have not the most distant recollection of ever having had the honour of seeing you before."

"No, possibly not; and yet I think I was much the same sort of looking fellow then that I am now; but Wilmington will perhaps have a better

memory. Tell me, madam, is he at home; and where shall I find him?"

The young lady had, by this time, changed colour once or twice, and kept eyeing the figure before her with a strange searching look. It seemed as if, in spite of what she had just said, he was not so totally unknown to her as her words implied. She looked at him; turned away, and was silent for a few seconds.

But Lizzy was not one who lost her presence of mind upon any occasion where her interests were concerned.

When, therefore, the stranger advanced, as she retreated, repeating his request more urgently, that she would tell him where Mr. Wilmington was to be found, the young lady answered somewhat pettishly, that she was sure she didn't exactly know; all she could tell was, that he had left home for a few days, and wouldn't be back—she couldn't tell when.

"Left home!" and his countenance fell. He looked once more round the room, sighed, and

sank down into a chair that stood near him.

It was merely the disappointment that overpowered him at this moment. He had wound his expectation to the certainty, that a few seconds more and he should be with his friend; and now the meeting, upon which he might have been said to have *lived* for so many months, was indefinitely postponed, he knew not till when.

"Really, sir," began the lady again, "I must say, this is a very strange liberty you are taking. William, Thomas, beg this gentleman to take himself away."

It was plain she did not think him mad, as did her servants; they were perplexed beyond measure at this strange behaviour. It was evident the enigma was not quite so inexplicable to her.

She was very much agitated, however; her cheeks, even her lips, were pale; but she struggled hard to preserve an exterior of composure.

"If you do not know what day he will return, you can at least tell me where he is gone? I can

follow him," said Mr. Craiglethorpe, after a moment's thought.

"No, I can't—I really don't know; and if I did, Mr. Wilmington is away upon important business, and can't be troubled just now with strangers—and can't attend to other people's concerns—and, indeed, I can't tell anything about where he is....."

So she kept repeating in a hurried, uncomfortable manner—a manner every moment becoming more and more nervous and agitated, as she kept glancing furtively from time to time at the stranger.

"Strangers!—troubled! No, madam. I flatter myself, though *you* may have forgotten me, he will not. Did he never talk to you of his friend?"

"Leave the room!" cried she, authoritatively, turning to the servants.

They marvelled, but obeyed, and retired to the servants' hall to discuss their wonderment as to who the beggar could possibly be.

"His friend," rising, now the servants had

left the room, and giving way to feelings he could no longer control,—"did he never talk to you of his friend, Craiglethorpe?"

"Certainly, sir—very often," answered she, with astonishing coolness; "but that gentleman has been for years dead."

"You are mistaken, Lizzy Emerson," rising, and with a face working with much emotion,—"you are mistaken; he is alive, and the man before you is he."

He would have caught her in his arms and kissed her.

"I must beg .... Good gracious! I shall call the servants.... Excuse me, sir; I really cannot comprehend. Mr. Craiglethorpe, I beg to inform you, has been dead some years. We *know* it," with emphasis. "This is a most extraordinary attempt at imposition." But as she said these words, she grew paler and paler. She, however, walked past him across the room to her work-table, took out a bottle of lavender-water and applied it to her lips.

The stimulant restored the colour in some degree to her face; but if you could have felt her hands, they were deadly cold.

Mr. Craiglethorpe followed her. He was entirely deceived by her manner.

"Years and sufferings have then changed me more than I had imagined, Lizzy Emerson? Do you not know me, indeed?" said he again.

"I have looked again and again," said she, "and there is not the least likeness in the world;—besides, he's been dead years and years. And so,"—her courage rising with the danger she saw approaching, she really was sublime upon this occasion—"I would have you take yourself away, and not trouble Mr. Wilmington or any one else with such a barefaced attempt at imposture. For no one on earth will believe you for a moment who sees your face." And she was turning away to make her retreat by the window, whilst he stood as one petrified; but she presently turned, and said, "and I would desire you to say nothing of this pretended story to any of the servants, or,

indeed, to any one else. You will only get into a scrape, if you do,—I warn you; and," glancing at his tattered coat, "if this is a tale trumped up because you are in want of money—here," taking out her purse, "are five sovereigns; and if you want more," offering it to him, "come to me."

"Damn your money!" cried he, pushing her hand from him; "for you *do* know me."

The woman who could have preserved her self-possession so far, was not likely to lose it, whatever now might happen. She coolly withdrew her hand, and saying, "I intended to serve you. I don't want to force my money upon any one," again turned away.

She was longing to escape into the garden; her knees were beginning to knock together. A few minutes more, and she was afraid she should fall; but her resolution in this crisis never failed her.

It is a very curious thing how people like Mrs. Wilmington, when their interests are concerned, seem capable of a resolution, an unflinching determination, and a coolness, which would be

heroic in a better cause; and which their superiors in every other good quality might often be inclined to envy them.

Want of sensibility is at times a most convenient want, and compensates for many deficiencies. It stood Lizzy in good stead now; but her nerves were at last beginning to fail her, under the efforts she was making to conceal her agitation and dismay.

"Tell me where Wilmington is, this moment," he said, seizing her by the arm; "for you *do* know me."

She released herself; but she did not scream, as she infallibly would have done, if she had believed in what she persisted in asserting; nor did she fly to the bell, and ring up the servants to turn this rude stranger out of the door.

This did not escape him. His sharp eye watched her from under its overhanging eyebrows. As he eyed her askance, he saw her colour come and go, and her hands tremble; and yet she had sent away her servants.

So, after gazing at her for a few seconds, he said:

"What all this means, Lizzy Wilmington, I cannot pretend to guess, or what reason you can have for obstinately denying that you recollect me —when I am positive that you do. Wilmington's memory will be less treacherous—or rather, I should say, its evidence will not be denied. I insist upon being told at once where he is. Zounds! madam," cried he passionately, seeing her still hesitate, "do you think to keep us asunder?"

"Far be it be from me to keep him and any friend of his asunder," she replied, with affected gentleness. "And if it were possible there could be a doubt upon the subject, how gladly would he welcome his friend to his bosom! But I am not going to expose him to the pain of such a scene as this, which would annoy him still more than it does me; and therefore I must beg to be excused, —whilst I desire you, sir, to leave this house,

and give no more trouble upon the score of so absurd a pretension."

He looked at her again. Had his eye possessed the power, the flash from it would have blasted her.

Again he was silent for a few moments; then, gathering himself, as it were, together, he only said:

"Very well,—very well," and turned to go away.

But quick as lightning she was at the door before him.

"I will have no tampering with the servants for information, sir."

"Won't you?"

"No, and on that account I shall see you out of the house, if you please."

"Just as you like."

He laid his hand upon the lock of the door, then he turned, looked round, cast another withering glance of mingled hatred and contempt, such as it is impossible to describe, upon her, and

then, she following, descended the stairs, crossed the hall, and let himself out at the front door, which she immediately locked after him. She then hurried down to the servants' hall, and forbade any of the servants to hold the slightest communication "with that man, who was a wicked impostor." Having done this, she retired to the hall, a window of which commanded a view of the approach, and placed herself there to watch what he would do.

She saw him leisurely proceed on his way out without attempting any further communication with the house; but not till the iron gate closed after him did she quit her post, and then sank down upon a sofa, perfectly sick and exhausted with the efforts she had made.

Did Lady Macbeth fall a-crying, as many would have done under such a tremendous reaction? No.

She drank a glass of water which happened to be in the room, and then sat down to consider

what she should say to her husband when he returned.

Should she confess the truth to him, or should she persist in denying that the stranger was, or could be Mr. Craiglethorpe?

She decided upon the latter alternative.

CHAPTER IV.

So from this dream of life his startled soul,
Nursed on the treacherous lap of youthful prime,
Awakes, and sees upon these shoals of Time,
The waves of fate in billowy surges roll.

ROSCOE.

HER husband was not to return till the following day; but fearful that any accident might throw him quite unprepared into communication with the stranger, after a little consideration the first step she decided upon was to despatch a servant (for Mr. Wilmington was at no great distance) with a letter entreating him to return home, as something very extraordinary and disagreeable

had happened, which he ought to be informed of immediately.

The letter found Mr. Wilmington sitting at table at a friend's house on the other side of London, talking and laughing, laying down the law, and playing the great man in the very highest style,—that great man which his present fortune, in his own opinion, entitled him to be: he had, however, in spite of his apparent high spirits and gaiety, ever since the rapid changes which had taken place in his fortunes, become a much more nervous man than formerly. His spirits were uncertain; now higher than ever they had been known to be in his best days, at other times depressed, silent, moody: his temper, too, had suffered in a considerable degree by the various changes of his excited life; his good humour, being entirely constitutional, and sustained by no principle or real kindliness of feeling, was not proof against the disorder of his excited nerves.

Hasty he had always been; he was often now positively ill-humoured. He had never borne

contradiction well—now he would endure it from no one.

These fits of ill-humour very much diminished the sort of affection which his easy temper had inspired,—for few qualities are more popular among the mass of mankind than that of an easy temper,—so that the people about him were beginning to get rather afraid of him, and rather to dislike him. Lizzy, however, managed this as she managed all matters where her own interest and comfort were concerned, as some might call it, very cleverly. It is wonderful how clever, under some circumstances, these characters, with little determination, truth, or feeling, seem to be! She cared little for the outbursts of his temper; she had not sufficient love for him to feel her esteem and affection wounded by his faults; she endured these weaknesses with a placid indifference, and made use of them to exercise her empire over his mind. A failing temper throws the possessor of it entirely into the power of the cool impassibility which is not to be moved by it.

"He who hath not rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down and without walls," says the wise man.

The more violent and unreasonable he knew himself at times to be, the more was Wilmington blinded to the power exercised by his wife. The man who could dare to speak to her as he sometimes did, *must* be master in his own house. He fancied there could be no doubt of that.

To return, however; for there he is, sitting at table,—a plate of capital venison just placed before him, and a glass of hock of the first order in his hand; and he is pledging his host, a rubicund man of millions, who sits at the bottom of the table,—the very picture of high feeding and gross indulgence.

A servant puts the letter into his hand, saying that a man has just ridden express with it from Wimbledon, and had orders to beg it might be opened immediately.

At first he is inclined, seeing his wife's hand, to be angry at the interruption of his festivity, and

he lays it by his plate, and attacks the venison. A knock at the door is heard,—the servant, coming up to him, again bows his head, and asks whether there is any answer. His servant wants to know whether he must wait or return home.

Upon this Wilmington took up the letter, broke the seal, read it, and stuffed it into his pocket.

"Any answer?" asks the man.

"None. — Nonsense. — Tell him to wait a little."

He returns to his venison,—but the letter in his pocket worries him. It was so very urgent. What *could* have happened?

"Excuse me for a moment," and he rises from his chair. "Tell the man to come and speak to me in the hall."

Napkin in hand, prepared to return to the feast.

"Well, John," seeing one of his own grooms appear, "what's the matter?—any bad news from

home? Master Henry, Mrs. Henry—Miss Wilmington? Nothing amiss, I hope? Your mistress——?"

"All well, sir, as far as I know; but my mistress said as how I was to ride over as fast as I could, and see you had the letter the moment I got in; and I know she expects you'll be home to-night, sir."

"Anything happened? What can be the matter? Anybody been?"

"Nobody, as I know, sir, save and except a queer sort of an old gentleman as come in a hackney-coach, and went away again. A sort of a old lawyer, Mr. Boston says—he thinks."

"A sort of an old lawyer?" taking the note out of his pocket, and going to the window to read it with more attention.

"Something excessively extraordinary and disagreeable has happened. I don't believe a word of it. But pray come home as soon as you possibly can."

And Mr. Wilmington, whose manner had been

hurried throughout, turned pale, and his hand shook as he put the letter again into his pocket; and, turning to the groom, ordered him to ride to the next inn, and send up a pair of post-horses his carriage immediately.

The man left the hall as directed; but Mr. Wilmington did not so immediately return to his company. He took out the letter again, and again read every syllable of it, endeavouring, in the futile way people often do, to guess the secret hidden under these general expressions.

The more he pondered it the more uncomfortable he seemed to grow. He stood there at the window, his face turned towards it, seeming to feel extremely hot, and hurried, and uncomfortable.

Presently the dining-room door was heard to open, and a servant came out and approached him.

"Mr. Wilmington, my master bids me say, that he hopes nothing's amiss, sir, and that you are coming back to table. There's some famous

woodcock-pie, he bids me say, sir, as is getting quite cold."

Mr. Wilmington started, and looked suddenly round, as the man addressed him, then saying,—

"I am coming, sir, immediately. Please to give orders that I shall be told as soon as the post-horses arrive."

He returned to his place. But he looked so much discomposed that his host and all the company remarked it.

"What's the matter, Wilmington? No bad news, I hope?"

"Mrs. Wilmington suddenly taken ill," said he.

"Sorry to hear that. Hope there's no danger."

"Oh, no. Liable to these attacks. Always frightened about them. Very sorry, Denham, but I believe I must leave you to-night."

"Impossible!" cried his jolly host. "Don't be such a milk-sop. Beg your pardon,"—for Wilmington looked grave—black—very angry,—"but

I really can't think of sparing you. Mrs. Wilmington will be better, I don't doubt."

"I think it proper to go," said Wilmington, coldly.

"Well, I'm sorry, if it must be so," said the other, good humouredly; "but finish your dinner. That woodcock-pie I can really recommend;—it is capital."

He took some upon his plate; but it was observed that his lips grew quite white when he tried to eat it.

The company looked at each other.

"I hope Mrs. Wilmington is not seriously ill," said the lady of the house in a kind tone.

Then something struck him, and he began to assure her that she was not apparently very ill. for he recolelcted the assurance of the man that all was well at home, and feared that he might excite suspicion; and he stammered, and looked so very uneasy,—so much more uneasy than it appeared reasonable to be,—that the attention of everybody was again excited. Had he been still in

business, his credit would have sunk many degrees in that half-hour; but he was a gentleman at large. Whatever his misfortunes, none of the present company were in danger of suffering by them; so after a little confusion everybody returned to the interesting occupation in which they were engaged, and the unhappy man was left to his own uneasy sensations.

In about three-quarters of an hour after this, his carriage was announced; and, taking a hasty leave of his friends he entered it, and was on his way home. His drive was one miserable confusion of undefined terrors and perplexed thoughts. It was between one and two o'clock before he reached home; but he found his wife sitting up for him. She had taken off her dress and put on her dressing-gown, had dismissed her maid, made up her dressing-room fire, and sat there in an arm-chair waiting the arrival of her husband.

The more she reflected upon this most unwelcome visitor's appearance and words, the more

she was convinced that he was no impostor, but the veritable Mr. Craiglethorpe himself; but the more she ran over in her mind all the consequences which must result from this reappearance in the living world of the man so long considered dead;—the more she determined within herself never to acknowledge the identity: or rather it would be more correct to say, the more obstinately she resolved neither to admit nor to believe in it.

You understand what I mean. This is the way men cheat themselves—old divines would say the devil cheats them—into wickedness. I don't pretend to decide the question between our own deceitful nature and the Father of Lies;—but I believe this juggling with ourselves is the first step in almost every wickedness. So she sat in her dressing-room, not far from a toilette, upon which was a glass in a delicate silver filigree-frame, surrounded by small dressing-boxes of silver filigree, tortoise-shell, and ivory, with scent-bottles, green, ruby, and purple, and delicate painted china jars;—all the elaborate luxury she

loved so much, and to preserve which she would have been ready to pawn her soul. Pink silk and white curtains hung from the windows, hanging in beautiful festoons from cornices adorned with painted flowers and gold. The walls were hung with pictures, the room crowded as usual with fanciful chairs and tables; the carpet as if a ground of the softest ermine had been strewed over with bouquets of pinks and roses. So she sat leaning back in her chair, her white dressing-gown flung round her, her feet thrust into her embroidered slippers, with a strange, determined, dogged, resolute expression upon that usually vapid but very beautiful face, and a gloomy resolution in those fine blue eyes, listening to the night-wind which blew among the shrubberies, and watching for the sound of her husband's carriage. The French clock upon the chimney, supported by its golden Cupids, struck two, and a ring at the hall-door was heard.

She had been anxious not to excite the attention of her household, but she had desired Boston to

ask Mr. Wilmington to come up to her room as soon as he arrived.

He was not less impatient for the meeting than she was. He hurried up stairs, opened the door, and met her face to face, for she had risen as he entered.

"What is the matter, Lizzy? What can have happened?"

"Oh, such a strange thing! Such an abominable attempt at imposition! Really, what will the world come to?" she began.

"Tell me, Lizzy, what the matter is? What can you mean?" in an accent which struck her as being more hurried and agitated than even this occasion, great as it was, accounted for.

"Why, bless me! don't look so dreadfully ill and frightened, for I'm positive it can't be true."

"What? How? No, of course you would never believe it. But tell me, for Heaven's sake, who came, what was said, how it happened?"

"Well, sit down. It's a most odious attempt at imposition,—intended to extort money, I suppose;

but who'll believe it? I'm sure I was not taken in for a moment—it's impossible."

"Will you never have done tormenting me?" he cried at last, worn out with impatience. "Tell me the worst at once."

"Why, then, if you will have it, there has been a man here who pretends Mr. Craiglethorpe's alive; and that he himself is the man."

His jaw fell: he sat with his eyes staring, fixed as if in a fit; but he was not in a fit.

Slowly his eyes recovered the power of motion, and began to roll fearfully round the room. Then his features relaxed; the power of articulation returned; he drew a deep breath, and said, "Good Heavens! and what did you do?"

"Do!—sent him about his business, to be sure. What else should I do?"

At this he seemed to gather a little courage, and, sitting up in the chair in which he had fallen back, he said, "You were satisfied it was not he?"

"How could it be he?" she answered testily. "Don't we know he has been dead these four years?"

"We saw it in the newspapers, and heard it from the India House, certainly," said her husband; "but we had no positive evidence—no absolute, undeniable assurance."

"Positive evidence!—absolute, undeniable assurance! Stuff! The ship went down, and all on board perished. I should think that was positive evidence, absolute, undeniable assurance enough to convince any reasonable man. Why, what are you thinking of, you——" fool, she could have almost said. She was growing very much alarmed, and proportionably angry at this sort of hesitation upon his part. "You're not going to play the game of an infamous impostor, with your doubts and your hesitations, Mr. Wilmington, are you? We *know* he is dead; and there's an end of it."

"What did he look like?" said he again, in a

terrified manner, glancing round the room, as if he expected the apparition of his drowned friend to appear.

Look like!—how can I tell? Like anybody else, to be sure—nothing particular. I didn't look at him very much."

"But was he like?—was he like? You've seen him, Lizzy; he was an old acquaintance of your father's before he went to India: you were old enough to remember him. Now, was it like him? Was it like what you remember of him?"

"Not the least bit in the world—as unlike him as possible."

At this he breathed more freely, and sat down again; for in his earnestness he had started from his chair.

But still his restless anxiety required more satisfaction.

"I wish you would tell me all," he said; "and, as nearly as you can, what he *did* look like."

"My goodness, Mr. Wilmington, how strange you are! It would seem as if you were quite

unwilling to take my positive word for it,—that if ever there was an impudent imposture attempted in the world, this is one."

"I dare say—I don't doubt. Heaven forbid I should doubt!" said he to himself. But he grew paler and paler every minute, and panted terribly.

She paused a little before she began to comply with his request; then she assumed a serious air and said:—

"Now, Mr. Wilmington, tell me at once,—can you be so absurd as to wish this to be true? Or can you be so madly generous as to run the risk of acknowledging an impostor?"

"If he is so very unlike the man he pretends to represent, there is no risk of his imposing either upon me or others," he said.

"Why, I don't say he is so very very unlike as all that," she answered hesitatingly. "I am sure *I* could detect him in a moment, and dare swear he is the most impudent pretender in the world; but I am not quite, quite sure, other people—

people who didn't much care about it—would be as positive as I am," said she.

"You don't! What is he like, then? For Heaven's sake, tell me at once! How am I to know what to do, if you keep tormenting me in this manner? Is he tall or short?"

"Rather short."

"Fat or thin?"

"Why, thin to be sure."

"Florid or bilious?"

"A little withered, stooping, bilious-looking beggar-man, if you will have it; as lean as a skeleton, and his clothes almost in rags; looks as if he had not had a new coat or a good meal these seven years. That's how he looks, if you will have it."

"Did he ask to see me?"

"To be sure he did, and I am persuaded will never rest till he *has* seen you. He knows you better than I do, I perceive," she added, in a taunting tone. "I could not have believed in such gross folly. I verily think you're half-

inclined to acknowledge him now: you really seem to wish to see him, I declare."

For all reply, Mr. Wilmington shaded his face with his hand and sighed deeply.

And, oh that the hour should have come when he should wish that friend dead!—that friend whom he had once so loved, and who had so loved him, and had trusted in him, and enriched him; and whom at one time he had hoped to welcome home to enjoy the abundance of their several possessions together. And if it should be he! Great heaven, if it should! What would become of him?

Thus he sat, his face covered, such thoughts crowding through his mind. It was his better moment: the most worthless have them.

If it should be he! What must he do? Cast himself at his feet—confess what he had done—renounce his ill-gotten wealth . . . . . ?

"I wonder at you," said his lady, after he had sat thus some time. "I cannot help perceiving, by the way you take it, that you are not deter-

mined to crush this absurd tale at once. I tell you it is false: I am certain, positive, as sure as I stand here——"

Oh, woman! woman!

—"That it is false. I know you, and I know the world. It is a sort of a thing, that if you parley with and hesitate about, and inquire into, and in the remotest degree admit the possibility of, you'll have the whole world upon you at once, —the hasty, spiteful, envious world. And then it will be too late to be convinced yourself that it's all a scandalous lie. Nobody will believe you, or everybody will affect to disbelieve you; and though you may keep what you've got from going to those that have no claim upon it, but through this villanous deception, yet what'll be the use?—you'll be miserable, because Estcourt and Jones, and the whole pack of them, who envy and hate you, will be upon your back about it."

"What would you have me do?"

"Do as I do," cried she with energy, "dis-

believe it yourself, and then it's easy enough to know what to do. Deny it, positively,—but, above all," lowering her tone, and speaking resolutely and calmly, "I advise you not to see him. Don't parley with him; don't see him; say what is true; that you know Mr. Craiglethorpe is dead, and that you are not going to bother yourself with the tales of every unfounded and daring pretender who wishes to impose himself upon the world for him."

So she talked; till she almost led her versatile husband into the persuasion that the man, whom he could not help looking upon as Mr. Craiglethorpe, was the impostor she pictured him to be.

He began to juggle with himself; to begin by hoping it was as she said, then to feel almost sure, and then to say to himself that he was quite sure.

Quite sure, without doubt. But how came it then, that, being so perfectly sure as he said he

was, that he shrunk from and avoided all inquiry into the case, instead of searching out and punishing this infamous attempt, as he and she called it. You never asked your conscience that question, Mr. Wilmington?

CHAPTER V.

I would have formed
Some being to respond my aspirations:
To watch time's moments felt as they rushed by;
Some eye to lighten up to mine: some face,
Record of undecaying memories!

T. E. Reade.

With spirits depressed to a degree which he never, in the whole course of his life, had known before, Mr. Craiglethorpe, having discharged his hackney coach, pursued his way to town on foot. He walked on in a confusion of thought and feeling;—the whole of what had happened seemed to him like a bewildering dream.

Was it possible? Could he be the same man, the man who had some eighteen years before travelled along that very road, through scenes so little altered,—for that side of London has seen fewer changes than any other,—on the way to the house of his young, gay friend, where he was ever sure of a cordial welcome; where, among troops of gay and jovial men, he was always the first man in the company,—the favoured friend,—the important person; where he had at once enjoyed that in which his soul delighted,—the consequence and consideration attendant upon the possession of wealth, and the pleasure which he had heart enough to feel, of enjoying the respect and affection of his friend. For he had a heart, this worshipper of Mammon. He did not know himself, how feeling a heart; and certainly no one upon earth suspected him of possessing it. It showed its existence, too, in strange ways; but other hearts, besides his, have been so mismanaged by early rearing, and so mishandled upon the part of their possessors, that they mani-

fest their existence only by bitterness;—the bitterness of resentful, or suspicious, or jealous, or revengeful feeling. There must be some better influence acting upon the heart before its sensibility becomes the source of goodness and love.

And was it true? Could it be possible? Had he again crossed that threshold,—again entered those well-known doors; that home to which, through all his difficult and painful wandering, he had looked to as his haven? A haven where affectionate and hearty welcome, gratitude for confidence and kindness received, and a joyful restoration of his property awaited him. Could it be possible? Had he entered it a beggar, to be dismissed as a beggar? But then a ray of comfort broke in upon the dreary wilderness of his thoughts. Aye, dismissed; but by whom? By a shallow, heartless, young woman: he had known her as a girl,—he had never liked the forward, saucy, affected, mincing child: her very face, dress, gestures, words, showed that she had grown

up into what she might have been expected to grow up,—a vain, affected, heartless woman.

That she did not recollect him was not very wonderful; that, being in doubt, she decided at once against him, might be natural enough; but what was she? He felt more cheerful;—his spirits began to rise as these thoughts occurred as he went along. He had not the slightest apprehension of meeting with any difficulty in proving his identity; and though his faith even in the affection of Wilmington had been a good deal shaken by the treatment he had received, now his thoughts had taken another turn, his confidence began to be restored, and he resolved early the next morning to return to the house,—see one of the servants, learn where Mr. Wilmington was, and follow him at once, to whatever place that might be.

So he thought it better not to leave the neighbourhood, but to turn in for the night at the first public-house which presented itself.

His dress and look were not of a sort to com-

mand much respect or attention in such places. However, that was a matter to which he was perfectly indifferent. I never saw a man so indifferent to all the comforts of life. The hardest bed, the closest and smallest room, the coarsest fare,—it was all one to him. Then why was he so indefatigable to acquire, so greedy to possess, riches? To gratify his pride alone. And I think I prefer this motive, bad as it is, to that of mere selfish, personal indulgence.

He entered the tap-room, sat down upon a bench, called for bread and cheese, and, as far as creature comforts were concerned, was perfectly satisfied.

The fire blazed briskly, for the evening was cold, and several men sitting round the hearth, gossipped together, and discussed the different characters of the gentlemen who lived in the neighbourhood.

One after another these personages, so eminent in their own conceit as to be above responsibility, as they thought, and almost above censure, were

discussed with that shrewd good sense and caustic humour which belongs to our genuine Saxon. From this subject they passed to the last flower-show at Chiswick, and began to dispute whose gardener it was that got the gold and whose the silver medal.

"Why," said one, "it was Mr. Cheadle, the gardener at Wimbledon-place, as carried off the gold medal for the finest pines, and he came in second for roses. I know he did; and that's how you've confused yourselves; for he got a gold and a silver medal. He always does carry away a prize. His master and missis, as they tell me, would be in a pretty huff if he did'nt. And, to be sure, considering the power of money that Wilmington and his missis spend about their garden, it's not to be wondered at."

"That Wilmington always must have everything of the best,—cost what it will," remarked another; "and how he contrives it I can't guess. There's been talk of his being ruined *dead* many a time and oft; and once I believe it was true.

But some men are like corks: do what you will, you can't keep 'em under water."

"Reason enough," said a third, "that Wilmington should get to the top this time. Why, did you never hear of his good luck?"

"I heard he got a large fortune left to him."

"Sure enough, did he. Did you never hear the particulars?"

"No, never. How should I? I don't know Mr. Wilmington, nor any of his servants,—not even Mr. Cheadle, which is odd, and I a gentleman's gardener myself!"

"Well," continued the other man, who was one of those frequenters of public-houses whose delight it is to have a story to tell, and to get a listener in any way; "I'll tell you all about it; for I happen to know something of the family. You must know, there's two children,—Master Harry, the son, and Miss Caroline, the daughter,—and sweet children they both were when they were little ones, only Master Harry was rather ugly, and Miss Caroline as brown as a gipsy. But no

matter for that. The great Welsh heiress, Miss L——, took a fancy to the cut of Master Harry's face. Some say he gave her love-powder. How should I know? But it's queer, how some people manage to make riches flow in. Wherever there's money to be got, such like get it,—and that's the case with these Wilmingtons. They've got the fairy pocket, some say,—spend as they will, it's always full."

The old gentleman in tattered clothes now called for a pipe, and drawing near to the fire, began to smoke, his eyes fixed upon the fire, and as if he were intent upon watching shapes in the embers. He did not appear to be listening to anything which passed, but he missed not a word as the story-teller went on.

"Master Harry, as he used to be called, Mr. Henry Wilmington, as folk call him now—has always been a puzzle to me," he pursued, looking very wise; and as his audience began to increase—for the company closed their chairs round and fixed their eyes attentively upon him—he

evidently took pleasure in adorning his story with a greater variety of details than he had at first intended—"has always been a puzzle to me. To look at him, you'd think him a sweet-tempered, rather dull-looking, very shy, and somewhat awkward young gentleman;—not the least sharpness or smartness about him in the world;—and yet, someway, he's managed to feather *his* nest pretty well—ay, and his father's nest, too—for they're mighty close friends, father and son—quite thick together, as one may say. People seemed to think old Wilmington was a sharp hand; but the young one, in *my* opinion, beats him out and out. 'The still sow sucks the broth!'—ha, ha!"

"Well!" said the expectant and attentive audience, to recall the narrator to the point.

"Well, I say, Master Harry for me. First and foremost, he's got that pretty Welsh heiress; and how he's managed *that*, is a wonder to me, for she'd sights of lovers, as you may be sure she'd have; and he got that friend of his, Selwyn, and

he's wheedled him, till he's left him every stiver he had in the world."

A pipe fell upon the hearth, and was smashed to atoms. It was Mr. Craiglethorpe's; but he coolly turned to the waiter, and bade him bring another, lighted, and continued silently to puff away, his back almost turned upon the orator and his company.

"A' must be a sharp lad, as you say; but how could he manage matters, I wonder?" said one, evidently impatient for the story to be continued.

"Why, Selwyn and he went to the same school, you must know; and old Wilmington was always for having him down at the holidays. Sharp enough, that! He was but a pale, sickly sort of a lad—something the matter with his inside, they said—but he was in love with Miss Caroline; but she wouldn't have him, some say;—some say she intended, after a bit, if she did no better for herself;—certain, she kept him off and on, till the poor lad took worse; and one day he died."

The pipe did not fall to the ground this time; but the hand which held it shook. No one, however, cared enough for the stranger to observe him; and, indeed, his eyes closed, and he put his hands over his face, leaned back in the corner of the bench, and appeared to go to sleep.

"Well," said one of the company, "he was no relation to these Wilmingtons, after all. How came they to get the money? Had he no relations of his own?"

"None but very distant ones, as I've heard—except one, and he was a long way off over the seas in India—and he *had* left him all his money. But now comes the curious part: when the funeral was over, and everybody assembled to read the will, and Mr. Mason, the solicitor, comes forward with a will, purporting to have been made about five months before, and leaving all to the uncle, this Mr. Craiglethorpe. Howsoever, up comes Harry Wilmington with a codicil made the very day the poor fellow died, saying as how, his uncle being dead, by the newspapers, he leaves

all—every penny—to that Harry Wilmington, out and out. Stay, I think the father had the half of it, and Miss Caroline ten thousand pounds to her own share, or so."

"In the newspapers; but was he sure the uncle was dead?"

"Ay, so people said. I happened to be present, for I was then a sort of porter to Mr. Mason, and had carried up his bag; and as the room was full for the reading of the will, I managed to keep in. I like to see how things go on; and of all curious sights in this world, the reading of a will is the one as pleases me best."

It was wonderful how quiet Mr. Craiglethorpe kept all this time; but through the fingers of the hand which covered his face, two small black eyes, keen as those of the basilisk, might be seen peering upon the speaker.

"I remember all their faces well; it was a rare piece of fun to me. Mr. Mason looking so surprised. Master Harry *pretended* to look surprised —you saw he pretended, he was so *very* much sur-

prised or seemed to be. Mr. Mason bit his lips, took up the codicil, glanced at the signature, and handed it to Mr. Henry Wilmington, saying,

"I thought I had the honour of possessing Mr. Selwyn's confidence. Mr. Henry's hand shook as he took the paper; but he did take it, and pointing to the writing at the beginning of the will, held it out to Mr. Mason, upon which that gentleman shook hands with him, wished him joy; and taking up his green bag, left the room, and I followed him in a great hurry, lest he should scold me for being there.

"And so Mr. Harry got his friend's fortune; and in about half a year from that time he was married to the Welsh heiress. And old Wilmington lived away and spent his money like a prince; but Master Harry, bless you, has none of his spirit; he lives like a hermit, I hear, still; he's very mean they say. His mother was a poor creature, in that way too, I've heard."

"Does Master Harry, as you call him, live any better, now he's got the Welsh heiress?"

"Why, moderate; no money spent down here, at least they never take a house in town, or have any establishment. Some say they spend their money upon her property in Wales. But commend me to the father; he *has* a spirit! and I wish that young fellow Selwyn, when he was about it, had left it all, out and out, to the old one. But Master Harry was at his pillow they say all that day before he died, and never let a soul speak to him, not so much as his old man-servant Charles; and what's odd enough, Charles had a good legacy in the first will, and his name never mentioned in the second; but this I must say, the Wilmingtons did handsomely—they paid old Charles just what he would have taken in the first will, down upon the nail. Master Harry persuaded his father to do that."

"But was Mr. Craiglethorpe really dead?"

"Well, I suppose he must have been, for he was known to have embarked in the vessel the Sumatra, and the ship was never heard of more; but what I don't think right of that Harry; and,

indeed, what I overheard Mr. Mason say himself upon the subject, was this, that as there must have been a doubt upon the mind of every reasonable man, whether Mr. Craiglethorpe would cast up again or no, Master Harry, when he dictated that will, which there is no doubt he did, ought to have put in a proviso, in case Mr. Craiglethorpe did not appear by such or such a time;—and that perhaps smote upon his conscience afterwards; for I've heard say that he never looked quite himself from that time to this, in spite of his pretty Welsh heiress. But, however, he's getting more easy of late, I hear, for now four years are past, and no news of Mr. Craiglethorpe, except that one of his boats was found upon the coast of Madagascar stranded: some say that two men got to the Cape of Good Hope; and some say that a bottle has been picked up at sea, saying as how the ship had struck, and the crew taking to their boats, with little hope for life in a raging sea. How that may be, I don't know; but all I know is, since that time old Wilmington has thrown his money

like a prince; and that Mrs. Wilmington and he keep up the ball mighty well together at Wimbledon."

"And what is become of Miss Caroline? Did Selwyn leave her nothing?"

"Never so much as mentioned her in the codicil, which seemed odd; but her brother must have been in a confounded hurry to get things done, and seemed to forget to do things decently; but she had a legacy as I told you under the first will. Old Charles happened to be gone out upon business for his master that day, and so Mr, Henry had it all his own way by his friend's bedside; and he made the best of his time, you see. Still waters are deep. Who'd have thought that quiet-looking man would have had his wits about him so sharp?"

"Well, it's an odd sort of story," said one and all, "and thank you, mister: and now I reckon it's time to be thinking of going home. What sort of night is it, landlord?"

"Dark as pitch, and rain coming on. What

say you to a bowl of punch, gentlemen, before parting?"

"A dry tale wants wetting, heigh, landlord; that's your opinion? No, no,—no more, we've all had enough; and our wives will be whetting the edge of their tongues at home, if we don't look sharp."

The company rose, hats and great coats were donned,—one by one they quitted the house, leaving the stranger still asleep by the fire.

When they were gone, he called for a candle in a steady voice, and walked quietly up stairs; and it was not till he had entered his room, bolted his door, and set his candle upon the hearth, that he yielded to the emotion which shook him to the centre.

CHAPTER VI.

He did not sleep at all that night. Sometimes he walked up and down the room in a perfect extacy of rage and vexation,—sometimes he threw himself upon the bed, and closed his eyes, in a vain attempt to tranquillize himself with sleep; then he would start up again, stung by fresh recollections, and would pace the room as before.

Selwyn was then dead,—the only relation he had in the world, the only being save one, that he had ever cared for,—and *that* one....!

There was nothing so very, very wicked after all, supposing Harry had been assured of his death, in endeavouring to secure his friend's fortune for his father and himself: for, in truth, to whom would it go? There was not a relation in the world to claim it. It might probably be exhausted by suits with claimants, or go at once to the crown; yet there was a meanness against which Craiglethorpe's whole soul revolted, in thus taking advantage of the dying moments of a friend. And then the base ingratitude of both! in leaving his name completely out, and never providing for the possibility of his return. It wounded him, more even than the loss of this fine inheritance vexed and disappointed him. Selwyn ought not to have forgotten him thus, for he had been so kind to Selwyn; but, probably, poor fellow, so near his approaching end, he had little power of consideration left, but the other!....after all the friendship he had felt and shown for the father. He would not believe that Harry could be perfectly assured of his death,—feeling alive,—knowing he

was alive, it required a much greater stretch of candour than he was inclined to exercise, to realise the fact of such an absolute conviction in Henry's mind. The more he reflected the more he suffered himself to be convinced that Henry could *not* have overlooked this possibility, but that he purposely left his name out, that he might, in any event, secure to himself the undisturbed possession of this large fortune. And as these thoughts presented themselves, he was thrown into a transport of rage, indignation, and disappointed feeling, which may be likened to the passion of poor abused Lear.

With the injustice very common to men under the influence of such passion, his anger against the son spread in some degree to the father. Though convinced that Mr. Wilmington was perfectly innocent of prompting this will, he confounded him, in some degree, with his son, and it was with changed and irritated feelings that, as the day at last broke, he rose from his bed,

resolving to search him out without delay, and force from him at least all that property transmitted from India, which no circumstances could deprive him of.

The night spent by Mr. Wilmington in his gorgeous sleeping-room, was not more comfortable than that of his once friend in his sordid chamber. He found it impossible to snatch a moment's rest.

The past,—the irretrievable past, rose up before him, to torture with regret and remorse. Poignant regret, such as the ruined spendthrift feels when the long array of sums actually flung away is presented to his memory, half the amount of which spared would have insured present security and permanent happiness. Remorse, such as the most hardened heart is awakened to, when the

day of reckoning is close at hand, and can no no longer be put aside, and banished obstinately from the thoughts.

However Lizzy might endeavour to persuade him,—however much he longed ardently to believe in what she said, he found it impossible. That Mr. Craiglethorpe still lived, and had returned to England, he felt certain, and a cold shudder ran through his veins at the thought.

His wife went to bed and fell asleep. She had settled the matter with herself, and trusted that she had persuaded, and ridiculed, and taunted, and, in short, driven her husband into the conclusion she had determined upon his adopting: so, very much tired with the excitement of the day, she lighted her candle, and went away to her room.

Mr. Wilmington was left alone.

And then, not the phantom dagger of the age of violence, but phantoms as expressive of what constitutes the wrong, and the burden, and the temptation, and the wickedness of our present

life, rose up before him. Long arrays of figures. One hundred thousand pounds!—that sum seemed written in characters of fire; stamped upon his brow. Wherever he turned his thoughts, that stood before him,—One hundred thousand pounds!

What was become if it?

Not one farthing of it left. All gambled away in a reckless speculation. The first profits made by this manner of tossing about a large sum, risking it upon perilous speculations, spent; profits apparently doubling the original investment; and then, as we have lately to our shame, experienced, a sudden depreciation of the property, and a few useless bits of paper, all that remained.

The profits, as we have seen, had immediately been spent in Mr. Wilmington's lavish housekeeping. Now, all was gone. What he was spending at present was the income derived from Selwyn's fortune, and that was fast melting away in his hands.

How should he meet Mr. Craiglethorpe?

And yet, after all, he *had* invested the money; he had the *coupons* to show; he had his permission to make use of it, for his own benefit; and in this very speculation he had done so. Where was the blame?

Oh! he knew very well where was the blame; and the ingratitude, and the dishonourable way in which he had taken advantage of the *letter* of the trust, to betray the sense of it, and in order to realise exorbitant gains by the use of the money, had risked it in a hazardous speculation, and lost it.

That scene with Harry rose to his recollection, —the pathetic tone of voice, the pleading look with which he had urged.

"So generous a reliance! so great a confidence! Oh, sir!" . . . .

But there was more—more than this. Even these thoughts could not have blanched his cheek with appalling terror, or have made him, from

time to time, as he paced the room, look round him like a man inclined to fly.

The silence of the house, the echo of his own footsteps in the lofty drawing-room, at length seemed to become insupportable to him; he took up his candle, and having gone to his dressing-room, taken off his coat, and put on his *robe de chambre*, stiff with brocade, he proceeded to his own apartment.

Whether he hoped to find his wife awake, to gather fresh courage from her assurances, or some little crumbs of comfort from her society, I know not, but she slumbered profoundly, and he would not awaken her.

He stood some time by the bed-side looking at her.

She was very beautiful when her eyes were closed, and as she lay there with that fine fair hair of hers dishevelled round her face and upon her pillow, he perhaps had never seen her more beautiful. But he gazed at her without pleasure. Her beauty had lost its power, and a cold, com-

fortless feeling seemed to take possession of his heart. She had shared in his splendour, had gratified his vanity, and they had enjoyed his success together; but now, when he felt that the dark hour was approaching, that trouble and perplexity were gathering round him like thick clouds, and that something still more fearful loomed in the distance, he could hope and look for no comfort from her.

She had had but one expedient to propose the night before, namely, obstinate disbelief in the identity of one, of whose personal identity he could not bring himself to entertain a doubt.

If he wakened her,—if he confessed,—for he longed intensely to communicate his distress, and obtain support and encouragement from some one; if he did this, what should he meet?

He knew well what he should meet.

Taunts instead of sympathy,—reproaches for advice,—lamentations over her own unhappy destiny, instead of generous grief for his. He turned away more thoroughly alone, because he was not

alone—more miserable, because in the presence of one who ought, but would not, or could not, comfort or assist him.

The reflections of the night had, however, determined Mr. Wilmington to take his wife's advice and absent himself for a few days from home, in order to give himself time to arrange his thoughts and consider what steps to take.

After a nervous, sleepless night such as I have described, he had, as soon as he heard his household stirring, rang his bell, and ordered his carriage to be in waiting at ten o'clock, when he should have finished his breakfast: and he was now still in his dressing-gown, engaged superintending the proceedings of his valet, and giving directions about the choice and packing up of his clothes,—a matter of too much importance with him ever to be performed wholly by deputy.

He was walking about his dressing-room in a dawdling manner, sometimes lolling out of his window which looked to the front of the house, for the morning was particularly sweet and fine, and he enjoyed the fresh air at an hour to him so unusually early, sometimes loitering to the place where his man was engaged, then again returning to the window and looking out.

He heard the latch of the wicket by the side of the great iron gates click, and supposing it to be one of the gardeners coming from breakfast, he leaned out a little further, as he saw a figure half hidden by the trees coming up the walk, as he wanted to give the man some directions before his departure. The man was hidden from him, as I said, by the light waving branches of the trees, through which he could just discern what appeared to be a working dress.

"Hallo!" cried he, as the figure paused and seemed turning to go some other way, "Come hither, I want to speak a word with you."

And Craiglethorpe stepped from behind the trees.

He looked up—their eyes met—they knew each other in a moment.

Craiglethorpe quickening his pace, turned rapidly to the hall door and rang the bell.

Mr. Wilmington retreated hastily, shut down the window, and shook in every limb as the hall bell sounded through the galleries.

"He didn't see that I saw him—he couldn't;" thus he would fain have flattered himself. He stood irresolute what to do—there was a knock at the door.

"The man who was here last night," said a footman's voice in the passage, "is at the hall door asking for Mr. Wilmington."

"Say I'm not at home—I'm busy—I know nothing about him—I can't see him..... He's a troublesome fellow—tell him to go away."

In a hurried, stuttering manner this was said: the valet, a foreigner, raised his quick sly eyes, glanced at his master, shrugged his shoulders, and went on packing.

"What a d—— d time you take about it, sir,"

said his master, in an irritated impatient tone, coming up to the place where his trunk stood, with the valet kneeling before it; "do you mean to keep me here all day?"

The footman meanwhile had returned to the hall door; but again the stranger had forestalled him. He found Mr. Craiglethorpe had already entered the house, and was in the act of putting down his hat upon the hall table. Seeing the footman enter, he turned, and thus accosted him:—

"I need not ask you, young man, whether your master is at home, for I saw him. Where shall I find him — Up-stairs?" And he was proceeding to the back hall, in which the stairs were.

"No, sir,—not that way, sir. I beg your pardon, sir,—you can't go in there. Mr. Wilmington's not at home, sir!—not at home, I assure you, sir."

"You lying rascal! I saw him leaning out of

his window not five seconds ago, and he spoke to me himself."

"I beg your pardon, sir, when we are bid to say, 'Not at home,' *that's* of no manner of consequence. My master bade me say, 'Not at home,' himself; and after that we answer no farther questions."

"Bade you say not at home to *me?*"

"And why not, sir?" looking at him with a somewhat insolent and familiar stare; "why not, will you be pleased to say? I've seen master not at home to a Lord before now. So come, my good fellow, better budge! This hall's no place for such as you; and I tell you once for all, Mr. Wilmington won't see you this morning. He's busy, and he said he wouldn't."

"Not see me? Why, he *has* seen me, I tell you. Am I so changed? And yet he knew me; —I am sure he knew me! This puppy is making a mistake. Yes, it's the old place; he's in his dressing-room."

Thus he kept muttering to himself, and again endeavoured to enter the back hall.

But the footman planted himself at the entrance, and stretching out his arms with an air of determination, repeated he was "not a-going for to let such as him pass through there, and he had better take himself off."

"You impudent puppy! I tell you, you've mistaken your orders. Your master saw me himself as I was coming up the gravel walk. There's some mistake, I am certain. Go and tell him that his old friend——Stay! take that to him," hastily taking out a scrap of paper, and writing a few strange marks upon it,—he'll remember me now."

"Then if I go you'll promise to stay here till I come back, for I can't have you going rummaging all about the house when my back's turned, or what'll missis say. There'll be a pretty commence if you're not here when I come back."

"I'll wait."

The young fellow went away. The old man

re-entered the front hall; looking round in a sort of imploring, piteous manner. He did not look to God for assistance when he felt as if his old heart was almost bursting with various emotions. He had no God, he—he had never denied and blasphemed him as a speculative, atheistic philosopher might have done,—but he had forgotten him. He had suffered the thorns and briars of this world to grow up, and obscure the image altogether. In the bitterness of his soul he could not turn to God.

But that one look he cast round was piteous.

You must pity the man. Remember, he had never been taught better things. One generous, disinterested, tender affection he had cherished in his bosom;— it was being cruelly crushed. You must pity his pangs. We must have pity for all sufferings of the heart;—most of all in those who are without consolation beyond this world, —who know of nothing better. Then he went to the window and looked out.

How the trees were grown and changed—they

were now, from small shrubs become large plantation trees; but he could not look at them, changed as they were, without a rush of memories of what he had been in that house in times gone by.

The footman was long in returning; at last he came, and brought the scrap of paper in his hand.

"Master knows nothing about you.—Doesn't know what you mean by the things here on the paper.—Sorry he can't see any one—positively busy—is going out."

But this time Mr. Craiglethorpe was too quick for the servant; he did not wait to hear the sentence finished, but passing him, hastily mounted the stairs with hurried steps, laid his hand upon the well-known dressing-room door, opened it, and entered.

The valet had left the room, but in his place Mrs. Wilmington was standing, talking earnestly to her husband. The door opened; they both turned round: she gave a faint shriek; he turned deathly pale, but stood still.

"Wilmington! is it you who refuse me an

entrance into your house?" Craiglethorpe began, with an accent of melancholy rather than angry reproach.—"You, Wilmington!"

"Who are you, sir?" cried Lizzy, placing herself between him and her husband, casting a glance, as she did so, at the latter, which said—"Now, be firm, or you are lost for ever."

"Woman! stand by," said Craiglethorpe, advancing; "how dare you put yourself between him and his old friend? Why, Wilmington," holding out her hand, "you have not surely forgotten me."

But Wilmington was silent. He looked nervous, hurried, confused, uncertain; but he made not a movement to accept and clasp the hand thus offered.

"Wilmington!" and he went close up to him,—"old friend!" and he laid his hand upon his shoulder.—"Nay, lad, what's the matter; for, sure I am, you know me?"

"He does not, sir," interrupted Lizzy; "he's petrified at your audacity. To be sure, loving

Mr. Craiglethorpe as he did, it can't but be very painful to have an impostor ——"

"Impostor! D—n you, woman! you know me as well as I do myself."

Passion was awakened at last.

He shook the shoulder he held, and cried,—

"Come to your senses—speak out. Let us have done at once.... If—May heaven forgive me, if I am unjust!—If—Good God! what am I saying?—if—Wilmington! Wilmington!.... If—if—speak, only speak; say you won't—say you daren't. What! after all—all——"

"Can't you speak—won't you speak, Mr. Wilmington?" cried Lizzy, angrily. "What do you stand there for as if you were turned to stone? Speak, tell this old man...."

He could not speak; he could only turn away to release his shoulder from the grasp of his friend, and cover his face with his hands.

His wife followed him, whispering her remonstrances in his ear, urging every suggestion she could think of to confirm him in her purpose.

There was a door which opened to her bed-room. She took hold of his arm, and led, or rather pushed him through it. He suffered her to do as she would; and she closed the door after him.

"There," she said, returning with something very like triumph in her face, "*there*—I hope this scene is ended; and now, sir, that you see how excessively painful this farce, which you are pleased to play, proves to my husband's feelings, perhaps you will be good enough to put an end to it."

He was a stout-hearted, hard-nerved man. He had never in his life, perhaps, known what it was not to be perfectly master of himself under the most trying circumstances; but he stood there now perfectly bewildered—amazed—confounded —his ears tingling, and his spirit faltering—something rose to his eyes—the unwonted visitor—he dashed it away with the back of his hand.

Then he glared, rather than looked, upon that hard-hearted, beautiful, bad creature—then he stopped to listen. He thought to have heard his

friend's returning steps—there was only that little door between them—but they were severed, oh! far more widely, than if it had been a hemisphere —will he relent and come back?—can he have the heart to stay away?

He resisted the urgency with which she kept pressing, commanding, insisting upon his going. He kept pushing her aside impatiently with his elbow, which said, as plain as elbow could, "Be quiet—hold your noise,"—then he stood stock-still and listened again.

The expression of his face was strangely touching.

At last he approached the door. She would have prevented him; but he shook her off.

"Wilmington," he said, and laid his hand upon the lock.

The key turned within.

"Wilmington,—you are there. Speak."

Silence.

"Wilmington, speak. It is the third and last time. Speak now,—or I swear this is the last

time I will ever speak to you more, till we meet together at the day of judgment."

Silence.

He still stood and listened; but he had sworn, and would not speak again.

He seemed unwilling to take his hand from the lock; unwilling to sever this tie — so close — so strong. His face worked strangely—his colour changed: now a dark lurid red—now deadly pale. He hesitated—he shook the lock. At last he knelt down and looked through the key-hole. The key was in.

He would not be satisfied. It seemed as if he could not bear to believe that Wilmington was still in the room; that he could have heard him—that he had not escaped by some other door.

But she set him right as to that.

"You need not make any doubt about *that*," said she, seeming to understand him; "for he is there. The other door is fastened. And I think the best thing you can do is to take yourself away."

Again he shook the lock with violence.

Again he listened,—but he would not speak.

Then he looked round the room, as if taking leave of everything there.

Upon the dressing-table stood a very rare piece of Japan china, a present in former days from himself. This was the only article connected with the memory of former days that was still in the room. He took it up, and, before she could interfere, threw it out of the window, and then, without turning his head again, went out of the room and down stairs, crossed the two halls, and so, out of the house.

He was seen to look up at the house again as he walked slowly down the gravel-road.

And I have been told his eye lowered, as if a blast came from it. I fear that, in the bitterness of his spirit, he cursed it and its inmates,—and them and theirs, wheresoever they might be.

The curse was the more vengeful, because it found no vent in words.

And words would be vain to endeavour to

describe the deep—the uncommunicable bitterness of his resentment. It was deep as were his feelings—bitter as was his temper—immeasurable as was his pride. His faults and his qualities united to give it force. It remained henceforward the sole feeling of a blighted heart;—all that seemed to remain of the images impressed there by a life of five-and-sixty years.

CHAPTER VII.

Mr. Craiglethorpe walked slowly down the public road; and as he walked, the effervescence of his excited feelings began to subside, and to harden down, as it were, into a cold, enduring sentiment of deep unmitigable resentment. I do not think there was that desire for revenge which would have animated a warmer nature. Revenge is a passion, and this man was passionless. The feeling he had was almost the more miserable to himself, and even if possible, the more in

opposition to all the Christian spirit demands, than that sense of "wild justice," as Lord Bacon calls it, would have been. I think if he had desired to punish, he would have felt more naturally and warmly at least; and after he had punished, or even after he had figured to himself the possibility of having punished, there might have been softenings and relentings of the heart;—there might have been regret, perhaps remorse, for the unforgiving temper which had caused suffering to the man he had once loved so well.

But there was no softening influence of this kind,—nothing to awaken him to better thoughts;—he neither wished to punish nor revenge, in fact it was not in his power. He might have imagined himself revenged, and Wilmington punished and suffering; and the very imagination of such a thing, the very picture presented to the mind might, as I say, and would, in some degree, have had its effect on his feelings; but there was nothing of the kind. The turn his feelings took was different,—perhaps in one sense

better, but far more really dangerous,—that of deep, immoveable, passive resentment;—resentment settled, hardened, petrified round the heart. That sort of resentment under the influence of which a man says, 'I forgive, but I cannot forget;' and he neither forgets nor forgives. He listens no more to palliation or excuse,—the humblest submission is henceforth without avail,—"all very well now," or some such hopeless sentence. His resentment becomes henceforward a part of himself, and is never to be mitigated, far less conquered.

This is a fearful change in a man's character, and the more deeply to be lamented, because it mostly takes place in those of strong moral sensibility, and capable of acute feelings of affection or love. It is like many other of the most terrible faults,—the more terrible, because it is the growth of natural qualities, which rightly directed, would have been as powerful for good, as they are now fatally perverted to evil.

All that was good in the unhappy Mr. Craiglethorpe's character—his strength of will,—his clear perception of right and wrong,—the high imaginations which under all this mine of Mammon lay concealed,—and the tender affection of which he was really capable,—all militated against him, because the Divine Master, whose most earnest exhortation it was to forgive—He, who in his wisdom knew how dangerous, how fatal, to all that is best in man, is a long-cherished resentment, was no master of his.

In a Christian land—a baptised man, with the Gospel of love and truth upon his shelf, he never opened the page—he never said a prayer—he never listened to the word of truth; he lived, as so many live among men—a mere animal life, if I may so say,—I mean as entirely and blindly governed by his moral instincts, as the brute creation is by their animal ones.

Never pausing, never considering, never taking account with himself,—absorbed in the relations of the life of to-day, and utterly regardless, never

thinking of his relations with the future and the higher life with that Being,—the closest and the nearest to us all of any being,—his Creator, his Father, his holy Lord; ignorant as the veriest savage of everything relating to self-conviction, self-formation, self-edification,—the rearing up through the course of this life of a loftier, a better, a purer self,—prepared for a loftier, a wider, a better system of being.

Unfortunate, more perhaps than blameworthy; for let us compassionate, and not judge—most unfortunate, that no one in the days of his childhood and youth—those precious days of indelible impressions—had taught these things to him. Cast upon life's theatre a motherless, undirected boy, with no one to awaken that within, which might have been developed to a fine perfection.

See him there, walking along, hardening, as I said,—petrifying,—his heart turning to stone. All his better qualities withering away under the blight of this deep, bitter, resentful feeling.

He had not walked long in this way before,

with a mind so habituated to business considerations as his, the remembrance of his almost empty purse began to present itself, and the more substantial features of his unpleasant situation to mingle with those which belonged to sentiment.

He put his hand into his pocket and pulled out a few dollars,—all that he possessed at present in the world. He could not reasonably fear that he should not be able to prove his identity beyond question; yet there was a bewildering sense of uncertainty and doubt cast over his mind by Mr. and Mrs. Wilmington's absolute refusal to acknowledge him, when he felt morally certain that they knew him perfectly. Indeed it was impossible but that Wilmington must have recognised the secret signs he had sent to him upon the paper.

To prove identity to those willing to yield to evidence, and happy to acknowledge the conviction when obtained, is one thing; to force the confession from those resolved to

deny their own convictions, however stronfi, another.

Would every one with whom he had to do find it their interest to deny the hapless stranger, thus, after so many years of suffering and difficulty, restored to his country? And their interest being thus engaged, would there no one be found with honour and principle enough to receive him as what he was?

Craiglethorpe was a man of suspicious temper: his converse had been chiefly with men intent upon gain. He had seen too much of the shuffling and the overreaching, and the unfair advantages taken so often by men who live with the acquisition of wealth as their principal aim and prime good, not to have a bad opinion of the world; he had in his cynical way often sneered at the sorrow of the mourner for those who are gone, and said, "If the dead were to return, do you think anybody would be glad to see them?" He was now about to prove the truth of his own words.

Well-founded or not—and it is not well-founded, this general ill opinion of mankind in the mass—the man who has no confidence in his kind is far more helpless in a position such as this before us, far less protected—though it may seem strange to say so—than he who, with fearless confidence in human nature, casts himself upon what is right and good in his brother's heart, instead of busying himself in seeking protection against what is bad. But to return.

The first thing the man here described felt that he must do, was to replenish his purse. Wilmington owed him a large sum of money,—one hundred thousand pounds, and that he would claim. But to claim it with any prospect of success, his identity must be proved; and if his quondam friend refused to own him, this proof must be made legally; for this process, money or friends would be necessary,—and he, outcast and disowned, had neither.

He began to cast about in his mind, and endeavour to recollect any little credits which he

might have in this country—neglected amidst the sum of his great wealth. Tens, and twenties, and odd hundreds, here and there. He was not long without remembering several of these, which, in his reliance upon the large sum in store for him in Wilmington's hands, he had never even taken the trouble to call to memory. Among the rest, there was about five hundred pounds lying to his credit in the house of Jones and Estcourt, late Wilmington, Jones, and Estcourt; and his first attempt at being recognized and getting paid, should be there.

His adversity had rendered him prudent and frugal, and the exiguity of his purse rendered the utmost parsimony necessary in spending the little money left, till a fresh supply was obtained; so he had determined to walk all the way into the City; but by the time he reached Hyde-Park Corner he felt completely knocked up, and anxious to be in possession of all his powers when he presented himself at Jones's counting-house, he took a coach there, and laid out five of his few

remaining shillings in being carried to Mincing-lane.

There was something grand in the calmness with which, his first ebullition over, this man bore the reverse of his fortunes,—the result of such long habits of self-command, that it was scarcely in the power of anything to hurry—and of such long exercise of moral courage in struggling with difficulty, that nothing could daunt him.

In that respect he was a worthy, though usurious follower of the old philosophers; he was not over-anxious,—weakly, nervously anxious about his daily bread,—no, not when literally the means for furnishing to-morrow's bread was all with which he was provided.

He stopped at the door of the large house in the City, where Messrs. Jones and Estcourt carried on their prosperous business, and his pulse did not beat in the least degree quicker, nor his colour change, nor his nerves tremble, at the idea of the denial he anticipated.

He got down from his coach, told the man he need not wait, paid him, and entered the counting-house.

Both Jones and Estcourt were there. Clerks on all sides were busy plying their task, and Mr. Jones sat at his desk investigating an account. Mr. Estcourt was as usual performing his part, by talking with some gentlemen on business; his back was turned to the door. Craiglethorpe walked into the room, took off his hat, and looked around him before he addressed any one. The clerks were most of them young faces, that he had never seen before, but the head clerk was an old acquaintance; the hair was grey, which had been brown, and the hand, once white and delicate, was withered and veined,—but Craiglethorpe of course recognized him in a moment, and he just then, lifting up his head, uttered a sudden exclamation, and starting from his stool, gazed, hesitated—gazed again—and then hurrying forward, seized him by the hand, crying,—"Is it you? Can it be possible? Do I behold Mr. Craiglethorpe?"

"The same, my good old friend," said Craiglethorpe, shaking him with an earnest warmth by the hand; and the drear solitude of the desert, in which he felt as if he were wandering, changing like a dream, and restoring him to his post in life once more. "The same; and heartily glad to see you, Mr. Simpson, looking so well and hearty."

Jones had by this time lifted up his head; and he, too, came forward.

"Bless my soul! will miracles never cease? Bless us all alive! can it be you, Craiglethorpe? Why, we all thought you dead and gone, this four years back. Well, I'm heartily glad to see you—upon my soul I am. Mr. Estcourt," and that gentleman turned round, "would you believe it? here's our old friend come back to England, safe and sound; though looking a little the worse for wear—ha, ha!"

"I rejoice in my heart to see you, Mr. Craiglethorpe," was Estcourt's address, cool and impassible as usual; but really, for him, looking quite cordially, and offering his hand, "we gave up

every one for lost, who sailed in that unhappy Sumatra; for there did not seem a doubt existing that she foundered at sea."

"And so she undoubtedly did," answered Craiglethorpe; "but we some of us got out the boats. The old story—there are some who cannot be drowned; because, heigh Estcourt, the stale proverb—I am one of those; and here I am, high and dry; but a little—the outer man, at least—somewhat the worse for wear."

And he cast a glance at his threadbare coat-sleeve.

"Well, at all events," said Jones, kindly, "we're monstrous glad to see you, alive and kicking. But where have you been all this while?"

"It's a long story that," said Craiglethorpe, entirely restored to himself by this agreeable reception; "and I'll tell it you all in good time; but just at this moment other matters are rather pressing. You'll guess I'm not particularly well provided at this moment with ready cash, though

I've taken good care *all* should not go down in the Sumatra. However, things are not available in a moment of time; and so, to replenish the pocket for to-day, I'm come to you, my good friends. Mr. Simpson, if I recollect right, the last balance left a hundred or two to my credit. Might I trouble you to look if it be not so, and accommodate me, if I am correct, with fifty pounds?"

"Pooh! nonsense, man!" said Jones, good-humouredly. "Balance, or no balance, what does that matter? Mr. Leman, will you be so good as to hand Mr. Craiglethorpe here fifty pounds, upon his note of hand? I know you of old, Craigie; you couldn't eat your breakfast if your pocket was empty; and we've chocolate within ready for you, as soon as that article is accommodated."

"Thank you, Jones;—just the same good fellow as ever," said Craiglethorpe—and his eye slightly twinkled; "but I am more methodical than a ledger, you know, of old; just do me the favour, Mr. Simpson, to let me know how our account stands."

A huge folio, clasped with brass, was taken down from the shelf, and consulted by Mr. Simpson, wetting his finger, and turning over the leaves rapidly.

"Wilmington, Jones, and Estcourt, with Miles Craiglethorpe. The balance was struck July 10th, 1790. It is in your favour, sir, to the amount of five hundred and thirty-six pounds, fourteen shillings, and threepence three farthings."

"Thank you, Mr. Simpson; please to enter fifty pounds per contra," said Craiglethorpe, coolly; and turning to Mr. Leman, he received fifty pounds from the hands of that young gentleman, counted it, and put it into his pocket. He then turned to his friends again. "And how have you been, Estcourt, since we parted?"

"So, so—pretty well."

"Married yet? but you look as spruce as ever, I declare. Gentlemen, I wonder you're not ashamed of my company," he went on, with his old low laugh, which said and meant so much in

general, but now only said that he was restored to himself,—his own man again.

"Oh, hang it, single!" was Estcourt's reply; "and you, how is it with you in that particular?"

"Why, only look at me. Do you think such as I don't know better than to buy a wife?" with one of his old sarcastic smiles, "and how should I get one in any other way? Loads to be had for the asking where I've been—but I'm not such a fool as to want one. But you! you're different —you're a smart fellow—you're a handsome dog —you're a woman's man, Estcourt."

"Not very much of that," said Estcourt, glowing with an air of satisfaction at his well-made and well-dressed self. "Not very much of that; but I'm like you—I've no very high opinion of the sex—I have a certain contempt for a man who suffers himself to be entangled. No allusion to you, Jones. You were, we all know, caught in your calf days. No disgrace in that; but see, what fools and drivellers must men become before they

take unto themselves, later in life, young and pretty wives; and who'd take what's old or ugly? The pretty creatures soon get the upper hand of fifteen years older; and when they have taken the reins in hand, they drive to the deuce in no time; only see that absurd idiot, Wilmington. But I beg your pardon, Craiglethorpe, he is your particular friend."

"Yes," said Craiglethorpe, quietly, but with an odd look in his face, which neither Estcourt, nor Jones, being totally without suspicion, understood.

"We've lost sight of him for some years," put in Jones. "We parted not on the best terms—he swore we'd wronged him—and we were sure he'd hurt us, with his confounded extravagance and nonsense—but I hear he keeps up the ball famously in spite of all. His son, young Harry, has married a Welsh fortune, it seems;—and my stars!" suddenly recollecting himself, "was'nt young Selwyn your nephew?"

"Yes," said Craiglethorpe, briefly as before.

Estcourt was startled into recollection too by this remark. The truth is, they had seen and thought so little of Mr. Wilmington of late years, that this peculiar part of Mr. Craiglethorpe's adventures had not come into their minds in the pleasure and surprise of seeing him. Now Estcourt's sarcastic face assumed an expression of peculiar and malignant pleasure, as he said,

"If what the world says is to be believed, he got a large sum of money there too—but of course now——"

"I've had no time, of course, to look into matters. I find the poor young fellow dead—that did not surprise me. I knew he was past hope before I left India, and did not the least expect to find him alive. As for his property, we shall see to that; though, thank goodness, I am in a manner independent of it."

"Well, I hope Wilmington, when the day of reckoning comes, will be able to refund," said Estcourt carelessly; "for he's been leading the devil of a life, I hear."

"He's a thoroughly extravagant good-for-nothing fellow, that's all I know about him," remarked Jones, "and we were well quit of him here. But now let us go into the private room and drink our chocolate, for these young rascals," looking at the clerks, every one of whom sat with his head raised, staring at Mr. Craiglethorpe and listening to the conversation, "these young rascals won't put pen to paper whilst we go on chattering here."

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